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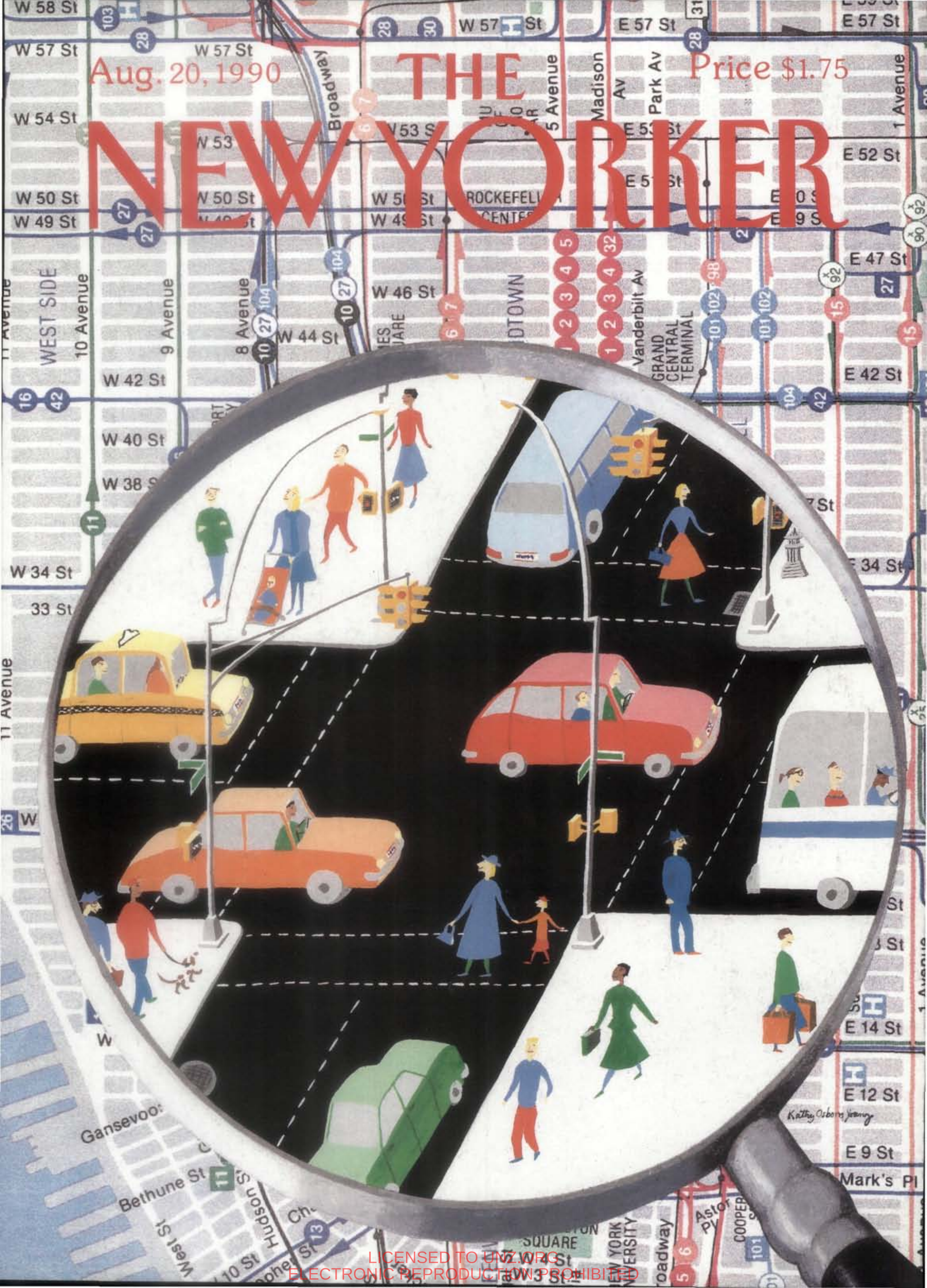
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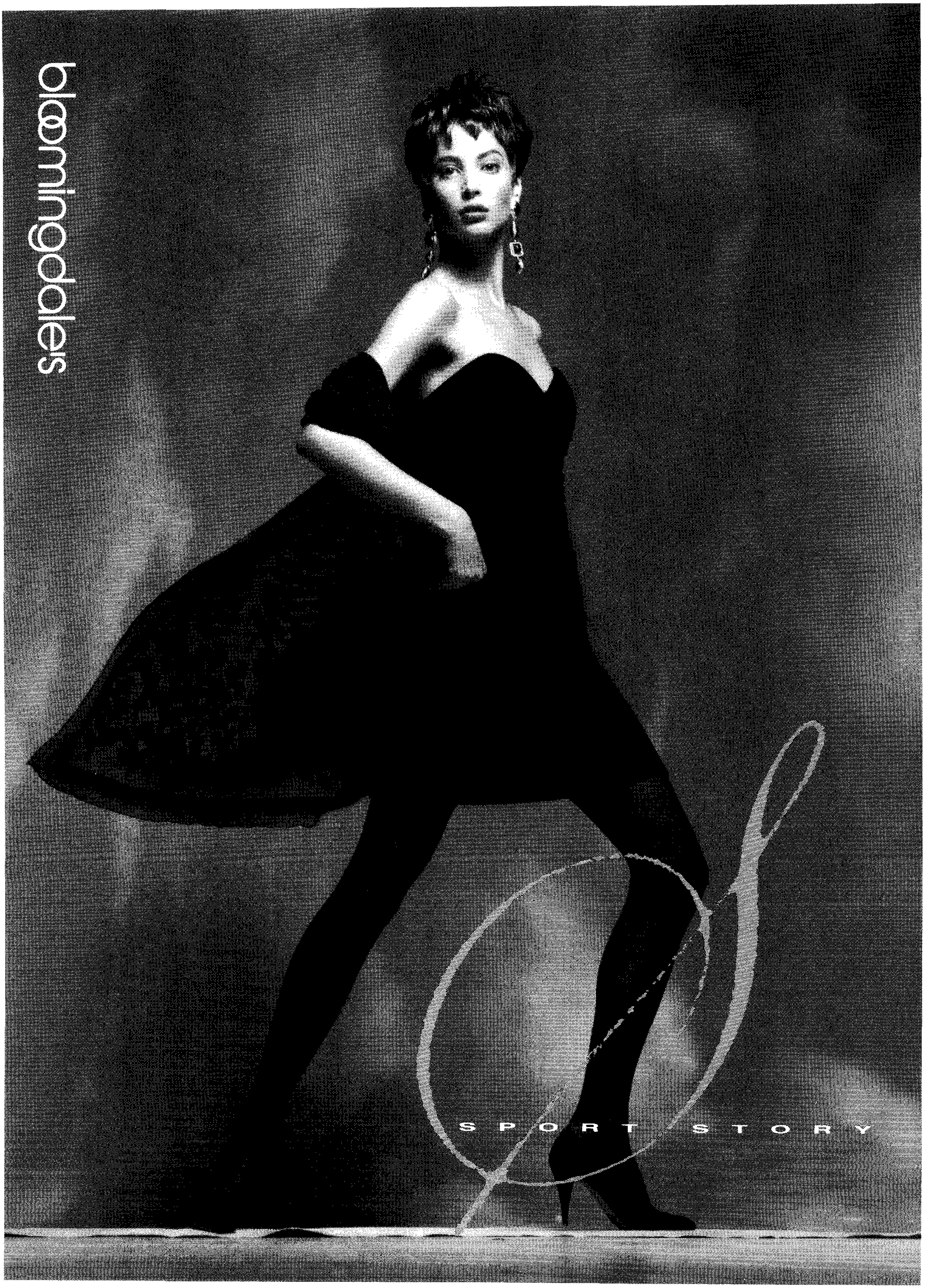

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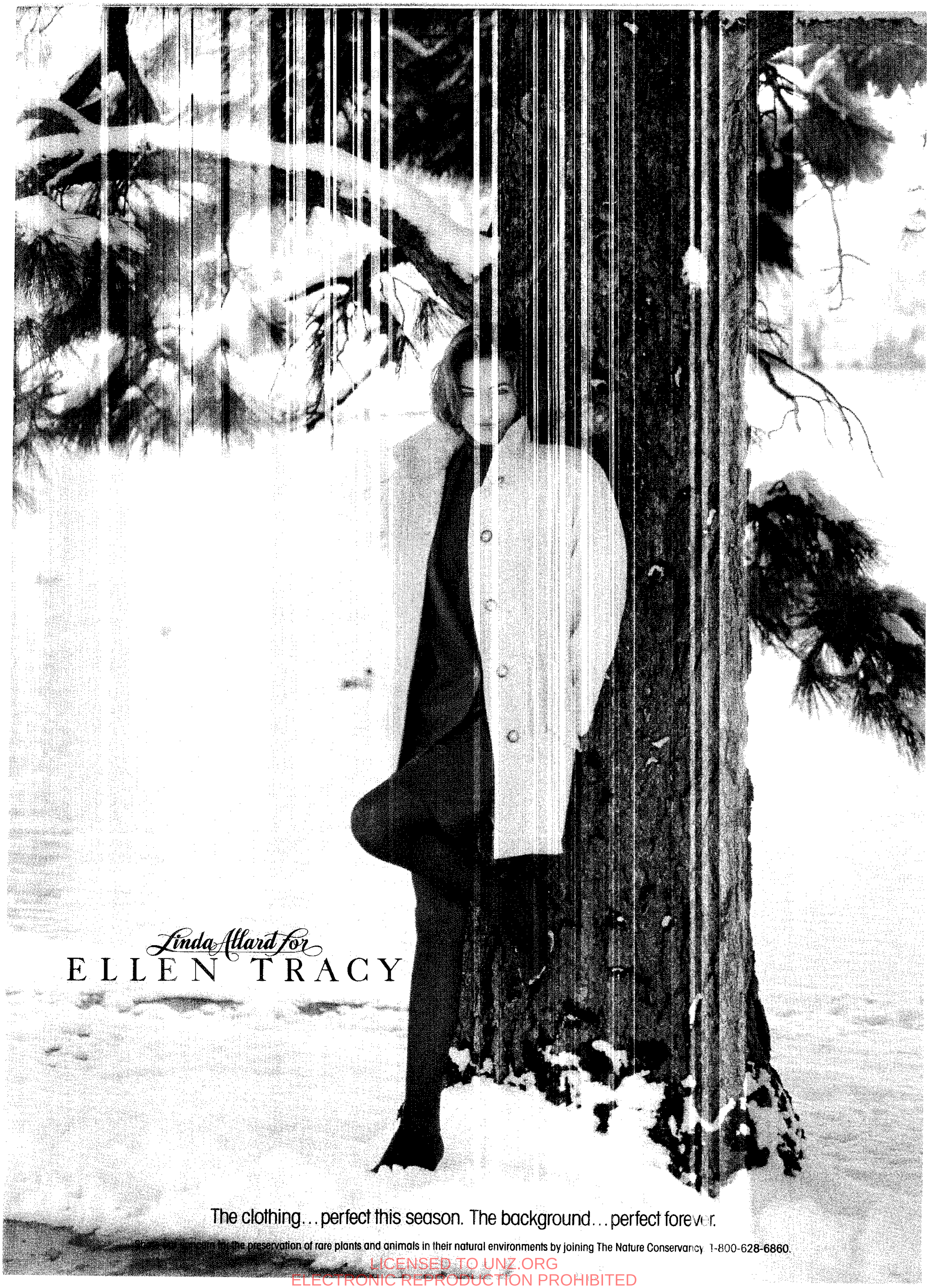

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

SOME weeks ago, an announcement on the Stage & Screen Services page of *The Village Voice* caught our eye: " 'OTHELLO' FOR TEENS," it said, and went on to report that auditions for the Park Shakespeare Company's summer program were being held. According to the ad, the program would offer six weeks' training in acting, speech, stage combat, and movement to young people between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, and would culminate in a production of "Othello." We rang the number listed in the *Voice* and found out that performances are, as they say in *Variety*, "skedded" for this week and next.

The casting call in the *Voice* reminded us of a book we recently received in the mail—a murder mystery that revolves around a high-school production of "Othello." "Passion Play," as the mystery is called, is set in a boys' prep school in Virginia; in fact, its author, W. Edward Blain, teaches at a boys' prep school in Virginia. Mr. Blain, who sent us the book because he sensed that we like Shakespeare, admitted in an accompanying letter that he had no reason to believe we have any interest in whodunits or in boarding schools. Actually, we love whodunits—especially in the summertime—and though innocent on the subject of boarding schools, we have an abiding interest in boys, so we were quite pleased to receive the book, which we very much enjoyed.

"Passion Play" brought to mind a number of other theatrically oriented mysteries we'd been meaning to mention, such as Michael Innes's 1937 classic, "Hamlet, Revenge!"—always a big favorite with us (we like to reread it every few summers)—and the novels of Simon Brett. Brett and his whiskey-guzzling actor-hero, Charles Paris, are well known to fans of the British whodunit; slightly more recherché is Brett's American counterpart, Jane Dentinger, who writes murder mysteries set in the New York theatre world. We've read only two of Dentinger's three books (the first is hard to find), but have grown rather fond of her tough-talking actress-director heroine, Jocelyn O'Roarke—sort of an artsy Philip Marlowe.

The Park Shakespeare Company will be performing August 14, 16, 17, 18, and 20 at such venues as Prince Hall Plaza, the Manhattanville Community Center, the 79th Street Boat Basin, the Henry Street Settlement, Belvedere Castle, Crotona Park, and the Countee Cullen branch of the New York Public Library. For performance times and locations, call 360-2728.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

Camille—A revival of Charles Ludlam's 1973 play. With Georg Osterman, Eureka, and Everett Quinton, who also directed. In previews. (Charles Ludlam Theatre, 1 Sheridan Square. 691-2271.)

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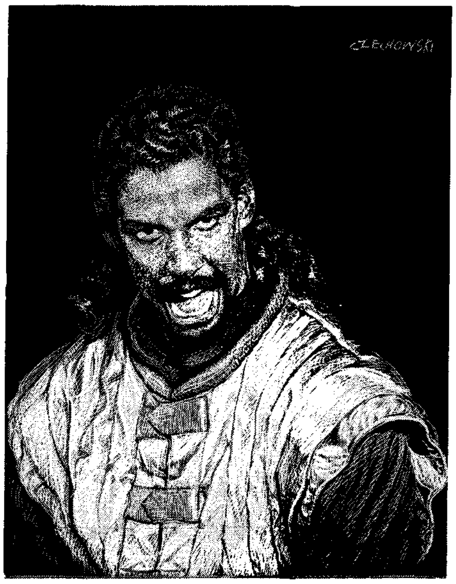
Light Up the Sky—A revival of Moss Hart's 1948 comedy, with Peggy Cass, Charles Keating, Bill McCutcheon, and Bruce Weitz. Previews through Aug. 19. Opens Aug. 21 at 8. (Roundabout, 100 E. 17th St. 420-1883.)

Money Talks—A comedy by Edwin Schloss. With Dolores Gray and Helen Gallagher. Previews begin Aug. 21. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Quiet on the Set—A comedy by Terrell Anthony about soap operas, which features a cast of actors from "All My Children" and "The Guiding Light." Preview on Aug. 14. Opens Aug. 15 at 8. (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.)



Denzel Washington as Richard III

Richard III—Denzel Washington has the title role in the second and final offering of the New York Shakespeare Festival's free summer series in the Park. Previews through Aug. 15. Opens Aug. 16 at 8. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about tickets, which are required, call 861-7277.)

NEW THIS SEASON

Aspects of Love—Andrew Lloyd Webber's latest extravaganza, based on David Garnett's frail 1955 novel of the same title, aspires to good taste and sophistication (it's about artists and theatre folk rather than cats or trains) but ends up being a monument to vulgarity. The combination of Garnett's triviality and Lloyd Webber's pretentiousness produces something so empty it implodes. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/23/90.) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

By and for Havel—A pair of one-acters in revival. "By"—**Audience**—is based on an episode that occurred when Václav Havel had a menial job in a brewery; "for"—**Catastrophe**—is Samuel Beckett's poetic tribute to Havel when he was in prison. Together, they make an evening that is both comic and stirring. (3/19/90) (John Houseman Studio Theatre, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038. Closes Sept. 2.)

City of Angels—Larry Gelbart, dramatist; Cy Coleman, composer; Billy Byers, arranger; James Naughton and Gregg Edelman, leading men; and Michael Blakemore, director, are all in top form in this sharp, jokey musical satire about Hollywood in the forties. The plot concerns the making of a private-eye movie (and the unmaking of its author). The spectacular settings and costumes were designed by Robin Wagner and Florence Klotz and lighted by Paul Gallo. (12/25/89) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 246-0102.)

Festival Latino—A theatrical *celebración* (through Aug. 26) featuring plays from Latin America and the United States. Unless otherwise noted, all performances are in Spanish, with simultaneous translation available on selected dates. The schedule: "Sin Testigos," an adaptation by Inda Ledesma (an Argentine actress-director) of a work by Sofia Prokofieva, through Aug. 17. . . . ¶ "El Palomar," by Carlos Catania, presented by Costa Rica's Grupo Encuentro, Aug. 14-19. . . . ¶ New York's Pregones Theatre in "Voices of Steel," a collective work directed by Alvan Colón Lespier, Aug. 16-19. . . . ¶ Inda Ledesma in "Andar por la Gente," a one-woman show, Aug. 17-18. . . . ¶ Brazil's Teatro do Ornitorrinco presents "O Doente Imaginario," an adaptation of Molière's "Imaginary Invalid," Aug. 21-22. In Portuguese. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

Forever Plaid—Stuart Ross's loving, tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. The performances of Jason Graae, Stan Chandler, David Engel, and Guy Stroman (as the Plaids, a close-harmony group snuffed out in the prime of life and brought back to earth for a single evening) are so deadpan, and the songs (arranged by James Raitt, who also accompanies on piano) are rendered at such a heightened pitch of musical good faith, that only from Ross's script and choreography would you know the thing is a parody. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.)

Further Mo'—This lively, touching, and brilliantly performed small-scale musical, set in a New Orleans vaudeville theatre in 1927, is a real gem. Written by Vernel Bagneris (who also stars), it uses blues singing (for the most part, rarely performed songs) to say something about the plight of the black entertainer in American history and culture. (Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. 475-5120.)

The Grapes of Wrath—This stage adaptation (by Frank Galati, who also directed) is the most truly adult version of Steinbeck's novel to date. It appeals to the mind rather than to the emotions; all the same, there's a cumulative effect. Don't go expecting to see John Ford or "Balm in Gilead," but expect to leave feeling as if you had. With Lois Smith and Gary Sinise. (4/2/90) (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 2.)

It's Still My Turn—Terry Sweeney, a former "Saturday Night Live" cast member, portrays Nancy Reagan in this one-man show. (Actors Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 564-8038.)

Lettice & Lovage—The marvellous Maggie Smith plays Lettice Douffet, a freewheeling guide to England's stately homes, and the elegant Margaret Tyzack plays a reprimanding envoy sent by Lettice's employers in Peter Shaffer's merry comedy about an unlikely friendship and other matters. Paxton Whitehead and Bette Henritze are effective in supporting roles. Michael Blakemore was the director. (4/9/90) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

The Man Who Fell in Love with His Wife—Kevin Conway in a play by Ted Whitehead. (Theatre 808, Lexington Ave. at 62nd St. 223-2547. Closes Sept. 1.)

Philadelphia, Here I Come—Brian Friel's wonderfully funny and touching play about a young man from a small Irish village on the eve of his departure for America really holds up in Paul Weidner's beautiful production. Grab this one: revivals this good don't come around often. (South Street Theatre, 424 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

The Piano Lesson—August Wilson's new drama, the fourth in this series chronicling the black-American experience in the twentieth century, is set in Pittsburgh in 1936. In its exquisite writing and over-all structure (involving the conflict over a piano that figures hauntingly and intricately in one family's history) the play resembles "Joe Turner's Come and Gone" more than "Fences." Wilson takes refuge in an overly mystical and melodramatic ending, but there are some great scenes—even if the subtle ensemble acting in Lloyd Richards' production is thrown out of balance by an excessive performance by Charles S. Dutton. (4/30/90) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 582-4022).

Prelude to a Kiss—Craig Lucas's entertaining romantic comedy slips into fantasy when an

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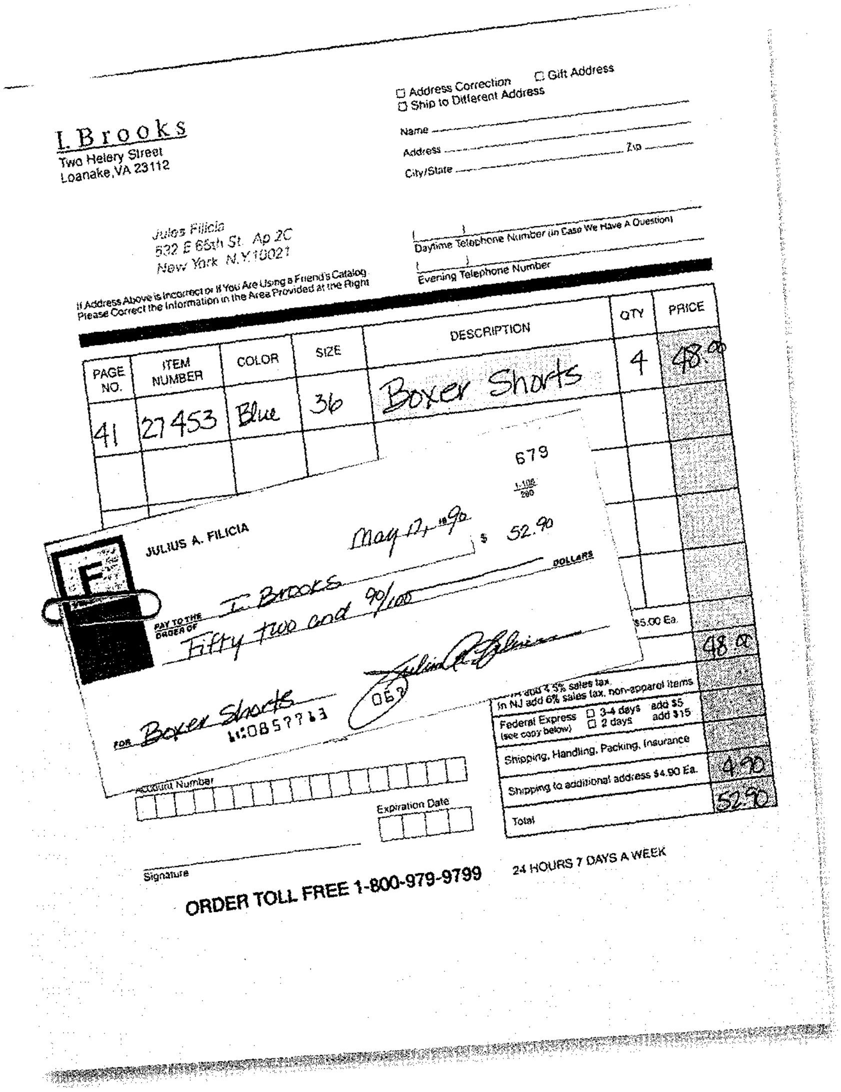

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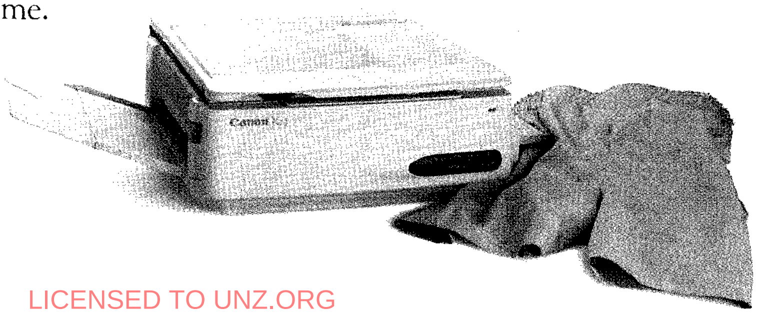


THE THEATRE—Cont'd

old man kisses a bride at her wedding. Barnard Hughes is the old man, Mary-Louise Parker is the bride, and Timothy Hutton is the groom. (3/26/90) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 944-9450.)

The Rothschilds—A revival of the 1970 musical by Jerry Bock (score), Sheldon Harnick (lyrics), and Sherman Yellen (book), with a cast led by Mike Burstyn. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.)

Six Degrees of Separation—You're best off knowing nothing about the new John Guare play, other than that it represents a perfect meeting of the playwright and the director Jerry Zaks. Out of a true story—one apparently about celebrity and Good Samaritanism—Guare has fashioned a wistful comedy about race, class, money, imagination, collective conscience, individual psyche, and the impulse toward art. What more do you want? (6/25/90) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

BUG-EARED

If you thought the spiders in "Arachnophobia" were tough, then you haven't run across the Raid Max Mobile, a roving insect zoo touring the metropolitan area throughout August (call 614-5228 for the schedule). The Bugmobile, as it has come to be called, looks like an ice-cream truck, except that its rear doors unfold to display charts and graphs relating to the compartmentalized exhibits inside. Kids receive insect-game sheets, complete with mini-mazes, a connect-the-dots cricket, and fun facts, like "Two Adult German Cockroach Females Can Produce About a Trillion Offspring in 1 Year." Adults get insecticide coupons, hints on pest control, and a chance to zap some roaches.

Exhibits include several species of live cockroaches, such as the American variety and, of course, the familiar German variety, which some consider to be the world's most tenacious household pest. There is also the Mexican red-kneed tarantula, whose sleek, silky silhouette threatens suburban bliss in "Arachnophobia." The showstopper is the Madagascar hissing cockroach, whose features are intimidating even from behind Plexiglas. This burgundy-and-black bug, which can grow as large as a shoehorn, makes a hissing sound like a cat when threatened. "In the informal language of cockroaches," said John Randall, an entomologist associated with the exhibit, "that means 'Back off,' 'I'm eating here,' or, during mating rituals, 'Hey, pal, that's my girl you're dancing with!'"

Smoke on the Mountain—This loving satire of old-time gospel music, set in 1938, is perfectly delightful. Written by Connie Ray (who also performs, along with six other versatile actor-musicians), it re-creates a Saturday-night service at a small church in rural North Carolina, where a family of more or less devout gospel singers have been invited to appear. (Lambs Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

Spunk—George C. Wolfe has adapted three short stories by Zora Neale Hurston, set in Harlem and the South, to make a gorgeous jazz-and-blues entertainment, giving them a powerful injection of his own mordant humor. Chic Street Man, a singer and guitarist, wrote the dynamic score. With Ann Duquesnay (singer), and Victor Mack, Reggie Montgomery, Kevin Jackson, and Danitra Vance (actors). Mr. Wolfe directed. (5/7/90) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

Tru—Robert Morse gives a deeply thought-out, accomplished performance as Truman Capote—by turns funny, bitchy, ironic, and rueful—at the end of his life and his tether. The play was written and directed by Jay Presson Allen. (1/1/90) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 1.)

LONG RUNS

BLACK AND BLUE: An evening of classic blues and jazz, conceived, designed, and directed by Claudio Segovia and Héctor Orezzoli, who created "Tango Argentino" in a similarly commemorative but far less visually opulent style. Musicians of renown have been assembled, and while LaVern Baker, Linda Hopkins, and Carrie Smith sing, a troupe of hoofers young and old give the tap-dance subculture a workout. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 246-0102.) . . . **CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.) . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run recently celebrated its thirtieth birthday. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.) . . . **A FEW GOOD MEN:** "Mister Roberts" meets "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." Aaron Sorkin's military-courtroom drama treats issues such as justice, honor, loyalty, and morality with the slick, facile smugness of a half-hour comedy series, but the performances, by an ace cast under Don Scardino's direction, are wonderful. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.) . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 1990:** A source of continual merriment, this revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it, and wrote the witty, barbed lyrics. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.) . . . **GRAND HOTEL:** The dazzling imagination of Tommy Tune's direction and choreography and the dazzling scenery by Tony Walton almost make up for the inner vacancy of this show (except for a glorious, eccentric dance by Michael Jeter), but not quite. The story and characters are skimpy and the music is undistinguished. Nevertheless, there isn't a boring moment. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 246-0102.) . . . **GYPSY:** This revival of the great Sondheim-Styne-Laurents-Robbins musical (directed by Arthur Laurents himself) is so delightful—and the cast so engaging—that we think anyone would be happier for having seen it. One suggestion: don't applaud when Mama Rose comes down the aisle (you'll drown out the first number). With Linda Lavin, Crista Moore, and Jonathan Hadary. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 246-0102.) . . . **THE HEIDI CHRONICLES:** Wendy Wasserstein's play looks at first glance like standard baby-boom playwriting fare, but some alchemical combination of graceful-mindedness and good writing enables her to capture, lampoon, and transcend her generation all at the same time. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 1.) . . . **JEROME ROBBINS' BROADWAY:** A collection of high spots from "On the Town," "Billion Dollar Baby," "High Button Shoes," "The King and I," "Peter Pan," "West Side Story," "Gypsy," "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," and "Fiddler on the Roof," all of which were choreographed or directed, or both, by Jerome Robbins. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 1.) . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.) . . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.) . . . **OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY:** Jerry Sterner's comedy about a New York corporate raider's attempt to take over a decorous New England business maintains its suspense from beginning to end. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.) . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** The much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets (by Maria Björnson), everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

DANCE

MASKS for dancers went out of fashion sometime during the late eighteenth century, helped along by Noverre's fulminations against them. But the masks that Jane Stein styles for Catherine Turocy and the New York Baroque Dance Company are advertisements for their restoration. Miss Stein constructs full-face masks, tied at the back of the head with ribbon. They are painstakingly molded from the features of the individuals who will wear them, in order to get a tight fit, then sculpted and painted to convey the illusion of translucent porcelain in a glowing light. Not only do these masks seem to fit the dancers like a second skin but they also seem to free them as performers, an impression that Miss Turocy confirms from the inside. "Suddenly you feel that the audience is looking not at you but at the dance and the character," she told us recently. "With the mask, I began to feel as if my body were a puppet that my spirit could manipulate. I became alive as an instrument."

A visit to Miss Stein's Chelsea loft this summer revealed that mask-making is a small part of her work. Between 1970 and 1974, she designed and built props for the New York Shakespeare Festival, under the tutelage of the master costumer Milo Marrow; in 1974, she went free-lance. She has worked extensively on and off Broadway for opera, dance, and mime companies, and she is an accomplished sculptor and puppet-maker. Some dozen years ago, Miss Turocy admired Miss Stein's puppets and commissioned a mask; she has since delivered about ten of them. (Neither woman has kept count.)

In making a mask for a dancer, Miss Stein's main consideration is that the performer be able to hear, breathe, and see easily. Peripheral and downward vision is crucial, so the most important part of the fit is the area around the eye. "You're creating another face," she said. "You want it to be right for the dancer you're working on and to reflect the baroque ideal of beauty, with a flat forehead, a straight or aquiline nose, cheeks with youthful fullness, and a small mouth with an idyllic smile."

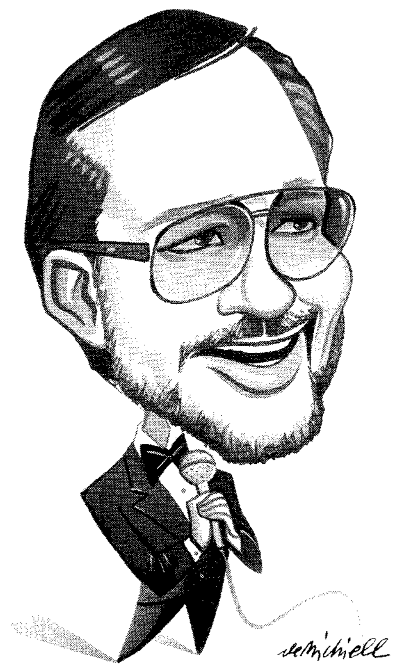
The New York Baroque Dance Company, accompanied by Concert Royal, will perform with Miss Stein's masks at Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors on Thursday, August 16, and at the Caramoor Music Festival on Saturday, August 18.

IN TOWN

Feld Ballets/NY—A week-long, "winter preview" engagement. Aug. 20-21 at 8: "Consort," "Embraced Waltzes," and "The Jig Is Up." . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 8: "Meadowlark" and other works. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Continues through Aug. 25.)

OUT OF TOWN

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival—Aug. 14-18 and Aug. 21-25: The Hubbard Street Dance Company. . . . ¶ Aug. 14-18: The Joseph Holmes Dance Theatre. (Becket, Mass. 1-413 243-0745.)



Rupert Holmes at Michael's Pub

NIGHT LIFE

We had liked to think that tourist boats around Manhattan were for other people, and so we were less than excited the other night as we headed over to Pier 81 (41st Street at the Hudson River) for a Budweiser "Musicruise." Upon our arrival, several things gave us pause: the giant Bud can along the West Side Highway; the ticket seller dressed like the Skipper on "Gilligan's Island"; the bloated staff of well-wishers addressing us as "folks" ("Have a nice cruise, folks"). And at every turn, it seemed, the Budweiser logo was in our face. Still, a boat ride is a boat ride, a sunset is a sunset, and a swell view is a swell view. In short, it would be hard to have a rotten time on one of these jaunts unless you got seasick or unless the music, which cannot be escaped, thanks to a loud and omnipresent sound system, was egregiously bad. We pretty much escaped the first possibility and completely cleared the second. The band on board was led by the bluesman Buddy Guy, who is an engaging and good-humored performer and who did not disappoint his captive audience. Mr. Guy's gritty, driving urban blues turned our humble vessel into the hardest-rocking party boat on the water. (The next "Musicruise" features the trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, on August 17. Call 956-5550 for information.) We have to admit, however, that it was hard to give the band the attention it deserved. The trip takes you down the Hudson to the Statue of Liberty, around the bend toward the Brooklyn Bridge, and back again, and even though the pace is leisurely (the ride takes about ninety minutes), you have to be alert if you don't want to miss anything. As for our initial qualms about the event's eager-beaver corporate marketing, we had such a fine time that we forgot about them: we even drank a few Buds.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

Apollo, 253 W. 125th St. (864-0372)—On Wednesdays, the theatre presents Amateur Night, a continuation of the legendary show that has launched the careers of such performers as Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Billie Holiday. Vocalists, dancers, musicians, and comedians participate. It's a chance to file away a memory for a later "I knew him/her when." Show time is seven-thirty.

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—The jazz personnel turns over nearly every night at this airy, loftlike restaurant-bar, in the gray zone between Zabar's and Columbia. Some may cry gentrification at the sight of the pastel walls, the potted greenery, and the bar crowded with Frascati sippers, but the floor-to-ceiling windows make for some fine Broadway-viewing. The veteran trumpeter and flugelhornist **RED RODNEY**—who started out as a bebopper, in Charlie Parker's band, and later somehow ended up in law school—brings in a quintet Aug. 17-18. Other talent: The David Janeway quartet on Aug. 15; the Carla White trio on Aug. 16; the Dave Morgan band on Aug. 20; and **RODNEY JONES,** Vic Juris, and Jack Wilkins on Aug. 22. Music nightly from nine. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—A jazz club that would be a perfect stop on a bus tour (there's even a souvenir shop that sells Kodak). It's a good idea to make a reservation and show up well in advance. The **YELLOWJACKETS,** a group that blends pop, jazz, and soul, claim Aug. 14-19. The British-born pianist **GEORGE SHEARING,** who has been playing professionally more or less forever, begins a visit here on Aug. 21, in the distinguished company of **NEIL SWAINSON** and **GRADY TATE.** In case that's not enough, guitarist **JOE PASS** rounds out the bill. First set at nine. Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—A big, pleasant room where they pack them in until someone says uncle. The walls and columns are basic black with some rainbow detailing here and there—the place looks a little like the outside of a van. If you end up without a seat, you can stand at the bar—finally a club where they don't force you to drink—and mull over photographs from great shows you've missed. **MAURA O'CONNELL** is here on Aug. 16, along with the Heartbeats. **TOWER OF POWER,** the horn-heavy seventies soul outfit, comes in Aug. 17-19. Show times are Sundays through Thursdays at eight and eleven, and Fridays and Saturdays at eight-thirty and eleven-thirty. Burgers, fries, and other things to make your heart beat faster.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A neighborhood bar where, if your neighbors coöperate, you can hear the beautiful, singular sound of musicians thinking. Pianist **JAMES WILLIAMS,** bassist Robert Hurst, and drummer Tony Reedus are on duty through Aug. 18; pianist **KIRK LIGHTSEY** and bassist **DON PATE** take charge beginning Aug. 20. Music from nine-forty-five. Dining.

Cat Club, 76 E. 13th St. (505-0090)—Every Sunday night, this club, usually dominated by bands in leopard-skin tights, is ceded to a gang of Lindy Hop enthusiasts called the New York Swing Dance Society. The clientele comes in all varieties, from old-timers who could do the steps in their sleep to young whippersnappers looking for an aerobic workout. Trumpeter **DEAN PRATT,** an alumnus of the big bands of Woody Herman and Buddy Rich, brings in his ensemble on Aug. 19. Music from eight to midnight.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—In the late seventies and early eighties, this dark cave was the hub of a thriving punk-music scene. Local rock has since diminished, but while other clubs of the era have fizzled, CB's perseveres, and young hopefuls continue to fill the stage nightly. Music from nine-thirty Sundays through Thursdays, and from ten-thirty Fridays and Saturdays.

Condon's, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—A snug, candlelit catacomb just east of Union Square. **BUDDY DE FRANCO'S** foursome, featuring **JOE BECK,** presides Aug. 14-19. The week beginning Aug. 21 belongs to a group led by **LOU DONALDSON,** a saxophonist and singer who teeters between bop and funk, and who likes to crack the occasional musical joke. Music after ten.

Continental Divide, 25 Third Ave., at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—Hipsters, posers, N.Y.U. students, the occasional skinhead—a typical East Village bar. The motif is prehistoric punk—a Stone Age mural, assorted toy dinosaurs and pterodactyls—and on peak nights there's a "take no prisoners" atmosphere. The Devil Dogs are here on Aug. 17, as well as the Blue Chieftains on Aug. 18, the Niagaras on Aug. 20, and the Dragsters on Aug. 21. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at ten, Fridays at midnight, and Saturdays at eleven. Dining.

Dan Lynch, 221 Second Ave., at 14th St. (677-0911)—Outside Dan Lynch, you'll come across a lot of suspicious characters who'll claim to know you; inside, you'll find a pupil-dilating, brown-on-brown bar. The place brightens up considerably at ten, with a variety of live blues, including vamps of the "put on your red dress" variety.

Delta 88, 332 Eighth Ave., at 26th St. (924-3499)—A tin-roofed, hubcap-awninged, soul-food-serving, chicken-shack theme bar. Exhibits include a rusted Orange Crush sign, a Pat Boone record jacket, bottle caps spelling out "Welcome," and other peckerwood flotsam. (If this place weren't a restaurant, it could be a flea market.) The clientele is mainly Northern urban. There's live music most nights, including gospel on Mondays and zydeco (with **LOUP GAROU**) on Thursdays. Shows Sundays through Tuesdays at nine, Wednesdays and Thursdays at ten, and Fridays and Saturdays at eleven. Chicken-fried steak, deep-fried crawdads (a.k.a. Cajun popcorn), and other exotic Southern fare.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—If submarines had jazz clubs, they might look like this basement haunt, which is not the place for those with a fear of intimacy. Singer **HELEN MERRILL** and her trio are here Aug. 14-19. Ms. Merrill, who was popular in jazz circles in the fifties and only recently began performing in New York again, has a cool, vibratoless voice that is especially affecting on ballads; her singing often has a quality of airy solitude that brings to mind Miles Davis's or Chet Baker's trumpet playing. **HORACE SILVER'S** quintet swings into action on Aug. 21. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL,** the Thomas Edison of reverb, leads a trio. Music begins around eight. Dining.

Fortune Garden Pavilion, 209 E. 49th St. (753-0101)—A satisfying combination of Chinese food and homegrown music. Rubberneckers may see the moon wheeling by the greenhouse roof on its regular tour of romantic Manhattan. The pianists who pass through here are among Gotham's finest. **DAVE MC KENNA,** who has been called in these pages "the hardest-swinging jazz pianist of all time," is at the bench Aug. 14-18 and the week beginning Aug. 21. Music from eight Mondays through Saturdays, and from seven on Sundays.

Gonzalez y Gonzalez, 625 Broadway, at Houston St. (473-8787)—Loud, brash, and big—de rigueur for the lower-Broadway dining scene. The theme is, of course, Mexican, and you get the whole enchilada—a giant cactus here, a parade-float sombrero there, animal skulls, religious artifacts, and chili-pepper clusters everywhere. The stage is in the rear, about a city block from the entrance. Music Wednesdays through Saturdays from ten.

Greene Street, 101 Greene St. (925-2415)—This is such a gorgeous, thirties-ish movie set of a place that you expect gunmen to burst in at any moment. The restaurant-bar—forested and twilit—is about the size of a football field, with the piano at the fifty-yard line. If your seats are good enough, you'll hear some able entertainers, including **HAL SCHAEFER** Aug. 14-15, Mr. Schaefer's duo Aug. 16-18, and **PETE MALINVERNI** Aug. 20-22.

Jan Wallman's, 49 W. 44th St. (764-8930)—A mirror-walled burgundy room that gives one the not unpleasant sensation of sitting in a giant glass of red wine. Aug. 16 belongs to Brad Phillips, Aug. 17 to Mark Coffin, and Aug. 20 to Arthur Siegel. Shows at nine and eleven. Dining. Closed Sundays.

Kilimanjaro, 531 W. 19th St. (627-2333)—The northern branch of the popular Washington, D.C., night spot. As the name suggests, African music is the sine qua non, be it live or d.j.-spun. Calypso, reggae, and world-beat formats also turn up; in any case, the huge dance floor seldom lies fallow. The Meditations, a reggae group, will perform on Aug.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

18, along with Julio Leitao, a Congolese performer.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—An Old New York kind of place, with dark-wood panelling, white tablecloths, and brass-figurine lamps. The musicians gather around the Steinway that sits in the dining room, but chin music is often the dominant sound. Pianist **ADAM MAKOWICZ** and bassist **JAMIL NASSER** are in effect Aug. 14-18; pianist **VLADIMIR SHAFRANOV** and guitarist **GENE BERTONCINI** get under way on Aug. 21. Music from nine-forty-five.

Knitting Factory, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—Situated in a neighborhood that boasts the Puck Building to the west and a host of windshield washers to the east, this modest space provides a forum for free-thinking musicians—beat and melody are optional, "music" and "noise" relative terms. Aug. 17: Michael Hills' Bluesland and Dadadoodada. Aug. 18: the **JAZZ PASSENGERS.** Music after nine.

Lauterbach's Brooklyn Beat, 335 Prospect Ave., at Sixth Ave., Brooklyn. (1-718 788-9140)—A grungy but well-intentioned watering hole devoted to home-grown Brooklyn bands. The emphasis here is on exposed cement, although one wall is decorated with Polaroids—"St. Patty's 1986" (people in green hats and leis), "New Year's 1988-89" (people in red hats and leis). Lauterbach's microwave menu includes shepherd's pie and chicken parmigiana, but the musical menu is almost always a better bet.

Lone Star Roadhouse, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—A Texan hangout where good old boys and Southern sorority girls mix with urban cowboys and those just looking. "Roadhouse" is an accurate description: it's a checked-tablecloth, long-necked-Bud, side-of-beef kind of place. Frank Allison and the Odd Socks will be here on Aug. 15. Music after nine. Dining.

Manny's Car Wash, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—A recent addition to the little-heralded Upper East Side club scene. Sonny Rhodes is here Aug. 15-16, followed by the Memphis Pilgrims Aug. 17-18. **LUTHER (GUITAR JUNIOR) JOHNSON** performs on Aug. 21 and **EDDIE (THE CHIEF) CLEARWATER** begins a two-nighter on Aug. 22. Music from nine-fifteen.

Marquee, 547 W. 21st St. (929-3257)—A rock club just off the West Side Highway (and no relation to the famed London venue). The scheme is black walls, a high ceiling, an upstairs with tables and a view, and a booming sound system. The Colchester, England, group **MODERN ENGLISH,** who took pop radio by storm with their 1982 single "I Melt with You" but haven't hit that mark since, will perform on Aug. 18.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—A good sound system, cheap drinks, and a regular-guy atmosphere make this restaurant-bar, home of the Hoboken Sound and of the phrase "jangly guitars," a popular hangout for musicians and their followers. Manhattanites who stay through the second set will need all their Scout training to get home. The **FLESHTONES,** one of New York's most persistent underground bands, come in on Aug. 18.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—A midtown restaurant and jazz lair for the tasselled-loafers set. The dark, sombre bar (carved-wood lions, iron grillwork) looks like a place you'd find in London's financial district; the dining room—putting-green carpet, lime-green leather banquettes, panelled ceiling—has more of a country-club feel. **RUPERT HOLMES,** a prolific singer-songwriter who won a Tony for his score for "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," and whose songs have been covered by, among others, Barry Manilow, Dionne Warwick, and the Barbra, is currently in residence. Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen. Closed Sundays.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A great, pricey cabaret in the sky. The singer and actress **BARBARA MC NAIR,** who has worked in all three formats—TV, film, and stage—and who had her own TV variety show for a few years way back when, is the current attraction. Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

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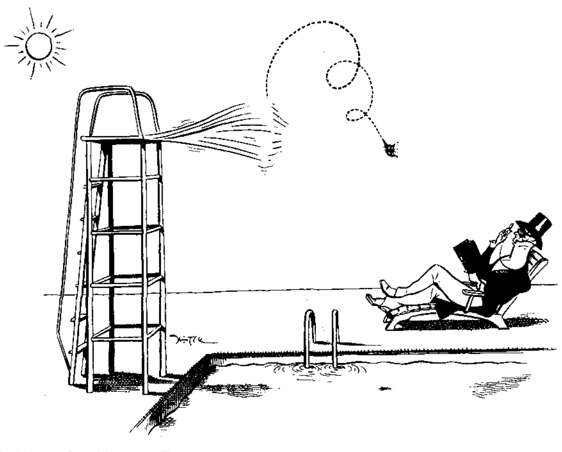

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—A place where a fella and a gal can put on the feedbag, get a little tight, and cut a rug. When the band is swinging, and you and your dreamboat are cheek to cheek, everything can seem just swell. Howie Wyeth's ragtime band claims Mondays, and Tuesdays are the property of **VINCE GIORDANO AND THE NIGHTHAWKS,** a band that relies on period instruments, old-fashioned felt-bannered music stands, and original-score arrangements to re-create the look and sound of a thirties swing outfit. Fridays belong to Rick Hardeman and the Basin Street Six, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and His Stompers. Music begins at six on Sundays, at eight-thirty Mondays through Thursdays, and at nine on Fridays and Saturdays.

Sounds of Brazil, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A big, cheerful room, painted a light tropical blue, where you can pick 'em up and set 'em down to sounds from Brazil, Africa, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. Ample seating for the contemplative. The **MIGHTY SPARROW,** a man who is very well liked in the calypso field, appears on Aug. 17. Also: Azymuth on Aug. 14 and the **JUNGLE BROTHERS** Aug. 15-16. Closed Sundays. Dining.

Spo-Dee-O-Dee, 565 W. 23rd St., at Eleventh Ave. (206-1990)—A night club in a part of Chelsea the real-estate agents don't show you. It's a modest-sized space with a dance floor, a stage (there's live music seven nights a week), and a pell-mell décor: Victorian-style chandeliers, movie-theatre drapes, murals of Cotton Club-era dancers. At peak hours (late), you'll get an eyeful of waves, perms, teased and sprayed locks, lip gloss, fishnets, fringed jackets, leather pants, and designer-outlet New Wave apparel.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—An itinerary stop for the international jazz groupies who, on any given night, can be seen roaming the streets of the Village. Up front, there's a glass-enclosed sidewalk café; in back is a larger room, with a pressed-tin ceiling, red brick, and more pinewood than a ski lodge. The expatriate South African pianist, flutist, and bandleader **ABDULLAH IBRAHIM** is around for a few weeks, along with his group, **EKAYA.** An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter Miles Evans is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The late Max Gordon, who opened this holiest of jazz shrines in 1935, once described the club's early patrons as a mix of "poets, W.P.A. writers, hustlers, broads on the make, and moochers." The graceful, soft-voiced singer and pianist **SHIRLEY HORN,** whose New York début, in the early sixties, was arranged by her admirer Miles Davis, leads a trio Aug. 14-19. The free-blowing saxophonist **PHAROAH SANDERS** starts up with his quartet on Aug. 21. A big band formerly led by the late Mel Lewis holds sway on Mondays. Music after ten.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Two floors of no-nuke veggie entertainment and consciousness-raising. Listen to bands play in the Summer of Love-muralled back room; buy a tie-dyed T-shirt at the Volkswagen-bus curio shop; catch up on current events at the bulletin board and community calendar. Or, if you'd rather just be mellow, crash out in the basement hippie love pad. **JAMES (BLOOD) ULMER,** a guitarist and composer whose palette includes Jimi Hendrix and John Coltrane, is here on Aug. 16.

Zanzibar & Grill, 550 Third Ave., at 36th St. (779-0606)—The logo that appears on glasses, napkins, and matchbooks here—a bongo-playing monkey in fez and shades—embodies this pleasant restaurant-bar's blend of Africana and yuppie cool. The eponymous island is evoked by live palms, Rousseau-style murals, and etched-glass jungle scenes; Murray Hill is evoked by everything else. The **KEN PEPLOWSKI** quartet shows up Aug. 14-15, followed by drummer **ANTON FIG** on Aug. 16, the **MILES EVANS** band on Aug. 17, and the **TOM PIERSON** orchestra on Aug. 18. Aug. 19 belongs to Carrie Smith, Aug. 20 to **ROY GERSON'S** septet, and Aug. 21-22 to **WARREN VACHÉ** and Harry Leahy.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—One of those snazzy, awninged eateries you've seen nestled amid brownstones in the Village and always wondered about. Pianist **JANE JARVIS** is here for two weeks, with bassist **FRANK TATE** through Aug. 18 and with bassist **MILT HINTON** beginning Aug. 20. Music from eight.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

If, as the cynic says, originality is the art of concealing your sources, then Emerald City should have covered its tracks better. While it may not have been the club owners' fault that Elektra Records picked the site (617 West 57th Street) for yet another party featuring Deee-Lite—the deee-licious-looking group that's in danger of becoming a victim of trio overkill before their album ever places on *Billboard's* top fifty—only a receptionist who spends her nights like Tracey Ullman's Kay would consider the scene less derivative than "The Two Jakes." The only difference between Emerald City's décor and that of the Red Parrot, the building's previous tenant, is the color of the light gels. The Susanne Bartsch Dancers, as her troupe of pedestalled dragoons are coming to be known, were positioned in their usual costumes. The crowd, who disproved their nightcrawler label by filling the could-use-a-good-swig-of-Spic-and-Span dance floor by nine, were as regimentally dressed as the cast of "A Few Good Men." (Two weeks ago in Atlanta, a club owner asked us if anyone in New York still had a pair of Levi's that came to the top of their shoes. "Cutoffs, work boots, three earrings—left side—vest, no shirt, something shiny below the waist. You all look like Huck Finn attacked by gypsies.") We entered to the beat of "Everybody Everybody," the most frequently played dance song in America at the moment. We endured one more invited event that featured a cash bar. We avoided yet two more steam trays of soaking chicken wings. "I've never been here before," sighed one portrait-collared young lady to her portrait-collared friend. Oh yes, you have. It was just somewhere else for the time being.

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Whitney Darrow, Jr.

Your Full Service Bank® knows that the heart of any city is the neighborhood. And that improving the neighborhoods helps build the quality of life throughout the city.

A good example of this philosophy in action is in Detroit, Michigan, where NBD Bank has been hard at work with programs to encourage neighborhood home ownership, and home improvement. They've funded 200 workshops on home repair, and even initiated the *Tool Lending Library*, that allows residents to borrow tools for home fix-up through three branches of the Detroit Public Library.

In 1989 NBD became the first bank in Michigan to establish a Community Development Corporation that works with community groups and private developers to rehabilitate, sell and lease residential real estate.

NBD is also committed to youth and education, with programs that help young people stay in school, gain self-esteem and learn job skills. One such program is known locally as *"12-Together"*...which brings groups of six potential school dropouts together with six peers who are determined to finish their education.

The religious leadership of Detroit is a powerful and stabilizing force in the neighborhoods, and NBD works closely with them, through their Community Affairs Forum. In 1987 NBD organized the Family Development Fund which is guided by an interdenominational group of clergy and provides grants to congregations in low income areas for food, shelter, education, and training for the underprivileged.

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ART

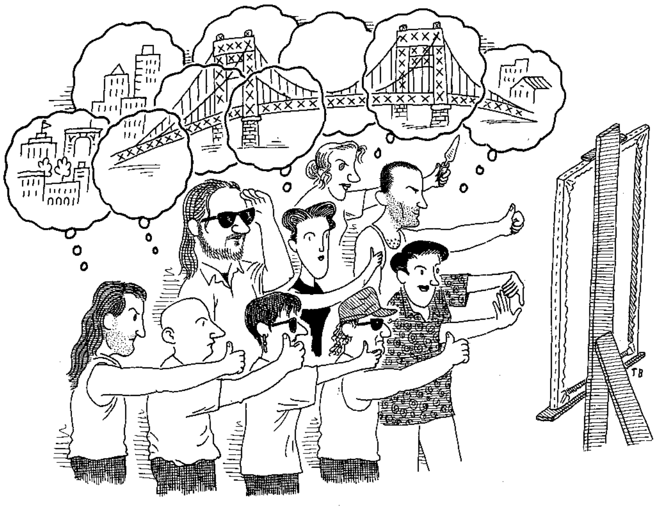
MICHAEL KIDNER'S body of work is the third to be surveyed by the Center for International Contemporary Arts (724 Fifth Avenue at 57th Street; through October 20) in its low-key but stylistically eclectic series on modern British art. (David Olivant and Mark Vaux were the first two, and there will be a show of work by Victor Pasmore in the fall, to complete the series.) Kidner is a quiet and, finally, academic artist, but there is an arrogant, cerebral lilt to his work that is well worth experiencing. In his rather stringent compositions we may find the answer to a couple of formal riddles some of us may have been dying to ask. Is there such a thing, for instance, as a totally abstract realist? The answer is yes. Kidner is a latter-day Constructivist whose work is generated by systems governing algebraic permutations and the "optics of color." As Irving Sandler points out in the catalogue essay, such passions are expressed in Kidner's more recent drawings, prints, and mixed-media constructions through time-honored vehicles like the grid, the graph, and the series. He has a nice, plummy, boatman's or carpenter's sense of materials, particularly wood and string. Architectonics are the primary focus of a work such as "The Net (From Mies van der Rohe to Freiburg Cathedral)," a 1987 movable wall construction, made of elastic, wood, hooks, and steel rings, that is arguably the pièce de résistance of the show. It suggests a platform-tennis court deconstructed by a mercurial and romantic ball boy. Here, as elsewhere, we are met with an impeccable non-objective literalism.

Kidner, who was born in 1917, did not start painting in earnest until 1953. During the Second World War, he studied landscape architecture at Ohio State University, then taught history in a Scottish prep school. His earliest works are abstract landscape paintings in the regional (Devonshire) style of the influential St. Ives School. He studied intermittently with André Lhote, in Paris. When he moved to London, in 1957, we are told, he "absorbed the lessons" of Pollock, de Kooning, and Rothko, and this led him to the conclusion that "the brightest image is produced by an after-image on the retina of the eye." Inevitably, perhaps, the result of this discovery for him was Op art, with Constructionism soon to follow. Though some of the drawings on view suggest a geometric hyperrealism, his recent work is not really retinal at all. But this may be the ironic result of most quixotic quests for the "purely retinal" in art: you go out looking for the afterimage of the moon, and wind up with a linear fact.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Art of Central Africa" is a dense and compact show drawn from the nineteenth-century holdings of the Museum für Völkerkunde, in Berlin, and includes some of the finest works known from Angola, the People's Republic of Congo, and southern Zaire. The range is quite extraordinary, but the strongest works are the "power figures," which were used for curing afflictions and for revenge. Each figure has an intense gaze, usually with its tongue sticking out of a rounded mouth, as if it were in some remote, drugged state. The most riveting figure is almost completely covered with fierce iron spikes, which were driven into it to unleash its powers. . . . ¶ The concept of painting an illusionary scene on a two-dimensional surface has always been dependent on the frame to establish the painting's world. The exhibition "Italian Renaissance Frames" brings the frames themselves to life, and demonstrates why at one time wood carving was considered a higher art than painting. Most of the frames are empty, and after a while the eye becomes so finely tuned to this delicate, often elaborate art that the occasional El Greco within may appear out of place. Through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ In a concurrent show, fifty-five American frames from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are on view. Through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ "Chess and Art." Perhaps Duchamp would have abandoned making art for the cerebral game of chess had he been the holder of this offbeat collection of fanciful chess sets. Included are chess pieces from various Middle Eastern cultures dating from the seventh century to the twelfth; a travelling set from nineteen-twenties Nigeria with a rollable board of hide; a particularly elaborate fourteenth-century European knight carved in walrus tusk in the form of St. George and the Dragon; and the famed "Crimean War" set from the mid-nineteenth century, with the white side representing the coalition against Russia, the major pieces being portraits of the various European and North African members of the alliance (the Russian aristocracy, ironically, are the reds). There is also a particularly surreal set from 1885, with owls, walruses, and bears, and Man Ray's enigmatic geometric sets, with their own understated surreal touch. . . . ¶ A well-selected display of ninety-four Chinese ceramics spanning twenty-two centuries. There are some beautiful pieces from the Tang dynasty, including a massive horse and an elongated equestrienne, and even the simpler Cizhou ware and a Northern Sung bowl are exquisite. Through Aug. 26. . . . ¶ "Reflections of the Floating World," an exhibition of Japanese Edo Period (1603-1868) woodblock prints that deal with the reflective quality of mirrors and water. Included are works by Utamaro, Hokusai, and Hiroshige. Through Oct. 28. . . . ¶ The museum's roof garden is open (when the weather is fine), with a new lineup of twentieth-century sculptures and a sixty-five-foot shade-providing pergola. Through Oct. 28. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—In the invigorating and unusually cogent exhibition "Architectural Drawings of the Russian Avant-Garde," we are given vivid pictures of several Russias, utopian and pragmatic, that might have been. We also run across the Russia that was more or less decided on by Stalin, though never built with quite the grandiloquence of, say, a 1931 proposal by the team of Gelfreikh and Shchuko for a humongous and fortresslike "Palace of Soviets." In this vision, some of the more instantly recognizable, Byzantine-Gothic motifs of the Doges' Palace, in Venice, are amplified with such uncouth militarism as to suggest a new bureaucracy made up of bellowing, paper-shredding Vulcans. Through Sept. 4. . . . ¶ The "Artist's Choice" installation assembled by Ellsworth Kelly and titled "Fragmentation and the Single Form" has a kaleidoscopic, slow-motion feel. In a compact selection of great modernist works from the museum's collection, we follow the square as it tips to form a lozenge or breaks out into a hexagon, and as it shifts from painting to sculpture to photography, as well as from abstract to human significance. The selection includes Matisse's haunting "Rose Marble Table," of 1917 (one of the artist's most powerful meditations on presence and absence, positive and negative space), and also works by Cézanne, Picasso, Braque, Léger, Picabia, Arp, Malevich, Mondrian, Miró, Giacometti, Brancusi, Edward Weston ("Mexico, D.F. [Anita]," a famous 1925 dorsal nude), and of course Kelly himself. The surprise inclusions—Audubon's 1832 "Roseate Tern"; William Bell's "Perched Rock, Rocker Creek, Arizona," a photograph from 1872; and Kelly's own photographs of Gaudí's cracked-tile surfaces in Barcelona's Güell Palace—give an aerodynamic lift and curve to what might otherwise have been simply a brilliant set piece. Through Sept. 4.



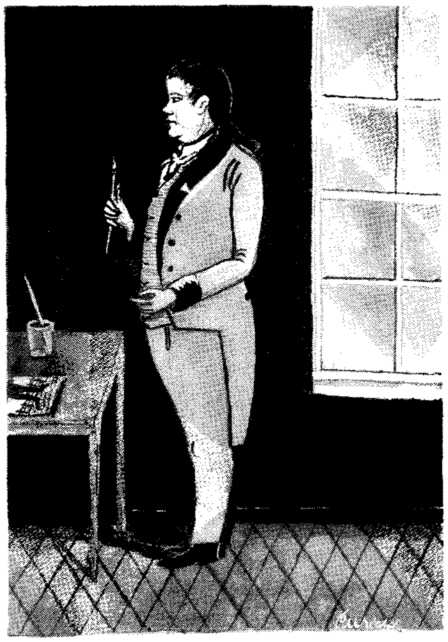
A show of Brooklyn artists at the Brooklyn Museum

. . . ¶ "Matisse in Morocco." The belief is becoming more widespread that Matisse's greatness has been eclipsed by Picasso's because so many of the Frenchman's best works have been hidden away in Soviet museums. The case is persuasively argued by this glorious display of paintings—close to half of them from the Pushkin and the Hermitage—and drawings that Matisse made during two trips to Morocco in 1912 and 1913. The so-called Moroccan Triptych is as sumptuous as painting gets, and all the works are so rich that it's fortunate the show is lean and concise. Through Sept. 4. . . . ¶ A retrospective featuring fifty-nine paintings by Francis Bacon. Through Aug. 28. . . . ¶ Phototext works by Lorna Simpson. Through Aug. 26. . . . ¶ "First Light," a series of twenty new black-and-white etchings by James Turrell. . . . ¶ Fifty photographs by Lady Hawarden (1823-65), from the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London. Through Oct. 9. . . . **NOTE:** The museum's sculpture garden, at 14 W. 54th St., is open, free, on Fridays and Saturdays from 6 to 10, with musicians from the Juilliard School performing at 7:30. (The museum is open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until autumn, 1991.

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—Ten graphite drawings from 1965 by Ed Ruscha, related to his photography book from that year, "Some Los Angeles Apartments." Through Oct. 14. . . . ¶ If an artist's value were measured by his influence, Hans Hofmann (1880-1966) would certainly be among the most important of this century: he trained more young American hopefuls than anyone else. But one need only look at MOMA's current "Matisse in Morocco" show to realize that Hofmann was a fine but ultimately minor artist. He certainly knew how to paint, and there are many charmers in this meticulously arranged retrospective, along with a few great paintings—"Memoria in Aeternum" and "Song of the Nightingale" float to the top. But there's also a lot of well-balanced glop. Hofmann represents the beginning of the end for abstract painting, offering vision without ever being a visionary. In the long run he may be best remembered not as the mentor of Burgoyne Diller, Louise Nevelson, Alfred Jensen, and Helen Frankenthaler but as the dean of abstract painting, a teacher who transformed scores of unfocussed artists into competent ones by training them to make "good" compositions that "worked." Through Sept. 16. . . . ¶ "Maurice Prendergast (1858-1924)." A retrospective of more than a hundred oil paintings and watercolors by this popular artist and co-organizer of the legendary Armory Show. Through Sept. 2. (Open Tuesdays, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—A pleasant, didactically pointless show, in the "Curator's Choice" series, of fourteen watercolors by Winslow Homer and nineteen by John Singer Sargent. The importance of this medium to these turn-of-the-century American stars is well known. Also well known are their temperamental and stylistic differences. Homer was the rugged, plainspoken, Romantic naturalist, and Sargent the deft, cosmopolitan aesthete. Several individual works on view, however, are revealing in small ways. Homer's eighteen-eighties Bahamian pictures strongly suggest themes in early nineteen-eighties work by Eric Fischl, and Sargent's charming 1908 travel sketch "In Switzerland" paints a very pretty picture of how one tall American coped with a small Alpine bed. Through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ A presentation of site-specific installations by ten artists who live and/or work in Brooklyn, including Susanne Muel, David Nyzio, John Toth, and Amy Hauft. Through Oct. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)



Jacob Maentel at the Museum of American Folk Art

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—Shortly after King Leopold II of Belgium was forced to end his rampage through the inappropriately named Congo Free State—today's Zaire—this museum mounted an expedition through that vast area which employed thirty-eight thousand porters and lasted from 1909 to 1915. The travellers brought back fifty-four tons of collectibles, most notably the rare animals that continue to grace the dioramas in the Akeley Hall of African Mammals. This show is made up of objects relating to the expedition and accumulated from the Mangbetu people of what is now northeastern Zaire: musical instruments with inventive figurative carvings; photographs of people with outrageous hats and hairdos; books such as "The Curse of Central Africa," from 1903, by Captain Guy Burrows; sculptures with Brancusiesque faces that should inspire further rethinking of the history of abstraction; and pieces that display colonial references, including gourds carved with images of armed soldiers. (Open Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 10 to 5:45; Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, 10 to 9.)

Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—Twenty-four custom-built doghouses by contemporary architects and designers are on view in the museum's garden. Michael McDonough's appealing "Dog House in the Mayan Style" is constructed entirely from dog biscuits. Its adobe-colored walls glisten from multiple coats of marine varnish, intended to protect it from pouring rain and hungry puppies. There are also doghouses made of bones, rawhide dog chews, and, in one case, an old television console with "Lassie Come Home" stencilled on its empty screen. Through Oct. 14. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge from 5 to 9; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—A selection of nearly a hundred and fifty Chinese porcelain winepots, jars, dishes, and vases made between 1620 and 1683 is on view. Through Aug. 19. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Grolier Club, 47 E. 60th St.—Eighty-two examples of incunabula—books printed before 1501, no more than fifty years after the invention of printing—from the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, in Amsterdam. Through Aug. 24. (Open Mondays through Fridays, 10 to 5.)

Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St.—Twenty-eight watercolors and two oil paintings by the nineteenth-century folk artist Jacob Maentel. Through Sept. 3. (Open daily, 9 to 9.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—The Gibson Girl did everything: she boated, she bicycled, she played tennis, she drove, she partied, and she married. Of course, all of these pursuits demanded different costumes, and Charles Dana Gibson's turn-of-the-century drawings created the kind of versatile mystique that would make Calvin Klein fall off his horse. The Gibson Girl's heyday, from 1895 to 1905, is celebrated in this show of fourteen full costumes, along with drawings, photographs, and memorabilia. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—An exhibit devoted to Portugal's pioneering maritime exploration, notably of Brazil, and its impact on European culture. Maps, treaties, and navigational instruments from the mid-fifteenth century to the late sixteenth are on display, along with manuscripts, letters, and paintings. Through Sept. 1. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall. Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 6.)

Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, 32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Road, Long Island City—Noguchi (1904-88), one of the twentieth century's singular talents, designed this oasis for more than two hundred and fifty of his sculptures. It contains a wide range of his work—from the early surrealistic biomorphic sculptures to several types of stone carvings—and documentation of his prodigious public art. The centerpiece of the museum is a peaceful, ivy-walled garden dotted with the artist's works. (Open Wednesdays and Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

Queens Museum, Flushing Meadow Park—"The Expressionist Surface." It is doubtful that this show of contemporary art in plaster will result in increased sales of the material. But it is probably worth a visit, if only to see several superb early George Segal sculptures, from 1958, a clear reminder of his roots in Abstract Expressionism. There are also a few works from the late fifties and early sixties by the Bay Area sculptor Manuel Neri, a fine, underrated artist whose best side is perhaps not so visible here. But most of the work by the fourteen other artists is clearly in the shadow of Segal, lacking the poignant restraint and poetic dignity of the master himself. Their pieces are little more than cheap expressions of creepy emotional realism—the sculptural equivalent of the most obvious sort of expressionistic painting. Through Aug. 26. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5:30.)

GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Mondays through Fridays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

"Rediscovering Pompeii"—The mood of this show of recent excavations is fascinating and bizarre. Viewers in the darkened rooms of the main exhibition space are greeted by a recessed, circular pit containing a "Woman from Oplontis," whose painfully contorted remains are cast in resin. Among the many gorgeous and refined objects here is the dazzling "Bronze Hand from the Cult of Sabazius." It not only rivals Donatello but serves as one of the very few overt examples of the Pompeians' focus on sex—their unabashed and very famous erotica was a cornerstone of daily life. This fact is discreetly mentioned in the exhibition, yet only Sabazius' busy hand and one Augustine phallus, it seems, were considered fit for our eyes in this age. Through Sept. 15. (I.B.M. Gallery of Science and Art, Madison Ave. at 56th St. Closed Mondays; open Saturdays.)

"Detritus"—A show of work in mixed mediums by twelve artists that addresses what is perhaps *the* subject of the year. Unfortunately, the treatment is a bit, well, spotty. There are some glaring omissions, such as Cady Noland's lyrical trash assemblages, and a couple of tired inclusions, such as one of Bruce Nauman's over-familiar waxen "Skinned Cats." But looking at a summer show with an ambitious theme often means having to take what can be got, and we do get Tony Cragg, a brilliant old hand at garbage if there ever was one, along with promising young rag-pickers like Jessica Stockholder—represented here by two-by-fours sporting wigs and newsprint—and Curtis Mitchell, whose piece consists of a distressed-velvet drape with a stain. Also on display are Alan Belcher's very direct "Spit on Mink," Georg Herold's ethereally icky "Caviar Painting," Matthew McCaslin's site-specific plumbing-pipe construction, Kevin Carter's faux mummy, and one of Petah Coyne's darkly brooding, mutant hornets' nests. Through Aug. 31. (Tilton, 24 W. 57th St.)

Group Shows—At **cole,** 200 W. 57th St.: The front room of the gallery features prints by a nice range of early-twentieth-century American artists. Chief among them is a lithograph by George Bellows of his most famous image, the boxers Dempsey and Firpo, and a lithograph by Stuart Davis of a highly animated Cubist figure at the seaside. In the second room are drawings by some of the same artists, including fine landscape sketches by Davis and a group by Reginald Marsh on his two favorite themes: burlesque and the beach. There's also an amusing Rockwell Kent titled "Wrestling the Enemy," with two hard hats fighting a huge snake covered with swastikas. Through Aug. 31. . . . **galerie st. etienne,** 24 W. 57th St.: Recent gallery acquisitions by Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, George Grosz, Max Klinger, Käthe Kollwitz, various Wiener Werkstätte artists, and the redoubtable Sue Coe. Seeing Coe in proximity to Kollwitz is especially interesting. They are nearly exact opposites, though both aim for essentially the same expressionistic, empathetic, and incriminating effects. Where Kollwitz distills all sorrows into "universal," quasi-ecclesiastical images—bereft mothers, work-worn hands—Coe hits our collective jugular through the journalistic precision of her slaughterhouse scenes and the fierce theatrics of her allegories, which are always of highly specific evils. Through Aug. 31. (Closed Mondays.) . . . **marian goodman,** 24 W. 57th St.: A handsome show of gallery artists and a few others. Many of the pieces have a surrealistic edge: Claes Oldenburg's sculpture of a heel yanked from a shoe; Rebecca Horn's contraption that dusts a pair of nipple-soled sneakers with pink face powder; Richard Artschwager's Formica-and-metal quasi-musical instrument; newcomer Juan Muñoz's bronze lady in a bowl with podlike arms and brass-bell hands; and even Giuseppe Penone's bronze leaves pressed between wood branches. But other qualities are evident as well. Lothar Baumgarten's installation is a touching but somewhat tricky portrait of the railroads that helped shape this country and annihilate the native population in the process, and Thomas Struth's magnetic photograph of a conservator at work in a Naples cathedral manages to be both documentary and operatic. Through Aug. 31. . . . **pace,** 32 E. 57th St.: This gallery has perfected the art of display. In this show, a first-rate assortment of minimal and minimalist paintings, all from the "right" dates—a red Reinhardt, a blue-and-green Kelly, a masking-tape Ryman, a 1974 Mangold, and an exquisitely grayed Marden, among others—surrounds the exhibition's only gestural work, a luscious orange de Kooning from 1978, which, rather than confounding the finely honed selection, gives it body. Through Aug. 24.

GALLERIES—SoHo

Yishai Jusidman—Well-executed, Old Masterish landscapes painted on spheres mounted on metal poles. The works are romantic and somewhat sophisticated, but also gimmicky—mere landscapes on sticks. Through Aug. 17. (Shainman, 560 Broadway.)

Christopher Wool—Large paintings on paper, of either a Penckian phoenix or what might be described as a black putto done in the racist style of thirties Hollywood movies. The two images are arranged in various combinations—singly, in pairs, as friezes. The paintings are smart-ass, cynical works about the state of originality and the role of the artist in today's art world, but they are also surprisingly penetrating and pack a hard punch. Through Sept. 12. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St.)

"Inside the Beast"—This selection of gritty works from the eighties could also be called "Colab, Lower East Side, Summer of '79." Included are several of John Ahearn's painted plaster busts that are among the artist's most animated; one badly damaged piece is accompanied by a photo of it in the Garcia-family home before it was destroyed by fire. And several works by David Wojnarowicz display different sides of this passionate political commentator. Through Aug. 23. (Lucien, 555 Broadway.)

Group Shows—At **alexander,** 59 Wooster St.: A show that offers the opportunity to examine how certain artists who experienced a tremendous amount of attention a decade ago are developing into full maturity. John Ahearn's two works—one a freestanding sculpture of a spread-legged, dreadlocked boy, the other a wall relief of what could be a father and son—are in a realist form but embody the Expressionist spirit. Robin Winters' works—two bedside tables with drawings in their drawers, handblown glassware atop them, and a very eccentric painting on the wall between them—formalize the incidental in a touching and somewhat subversive way. Tom Otterness's bronze floor sculpture of half a head, in heroic W.P.A. style, embodies no less than a dismantling of the old macho order. Through Aug. 24. . . . **lorence-monk,** 578 Broadway: This show features lots of pristine minimalist painting, all of it beautiful. Some of the work, like Alan Uglow's, is overly precious; some, like Günter Umberg's, with its velvety sumptuousness, is less so. There's also some messiness here, in the form of Ursula von Rydingsvärd's hacked-wood sculpture and Kim Jones' mud-splattered cube of newspapers. But, over all, a bit more soul, a dash of oomph, would help measurably. Through Aug. 24. (Closed Mondays.) . . . **pace,** 142 Greene St.: It looks like the Pace gallery opened its grand SoHo space just in the nick of time. Practically everything here is about scale; even a large Nevelson looks humble in this context. A huge Serra angled-wedge drawing in oil stick is both heroic and resistant to a heroic reading. A soft version of a painted steel sculpture by Oldenburg, envisioned here in a fallen state—it seems to have been yanked from the ground—is loaded with pathos and expresses the uprooting of patriarchal authority. Condo delivers an amusing if unintentional recapitulation of modern Spanish painting, with a portrait of Krazy Kat thrown in. And Ryman is represented by a fine decaptych seen at auction last year in a damaged state but here looking real cool. Through Aug. 31.

OTHER VENUES

The Anchorage—The artists exhibiting this summer in New York's most dramatic space for contemporary art, the vaulted brick anchorage beneath the Brooklyn Bridge, take very seriously the various indications that our golden society is falling apart. As usual, the quality is uneven, and some things look much better than they actually are. There is an overabundance of sound installations with echoing voices and low-level, mood-evoking blue lights. (One includes the spoken text "We are the names of time. To talk is human.") But there are also some very affecting works. Jim Goldberg has constructed a full-size house of the picket-fence variety; on its exterior he has projected slides of homeless youths and their drawings, which describe in documentary detail the squalor, danger, and isolation in which they live. Nancy Rubins has erected a personal public monument, a memorial to a collaborator who died recently of AIDS. It is a massive piece that is composed of a huge dead oak tree and sixty thousand pounds of rubble from a sculpture they constructed together, most of it contained now in sealed metal cases. In a simple, stark sound show, Jerri Allyn makes such commonsense statements as "Jasper Johns sells in the millions, paintings with defaced flag use" and "Wouldn't you love to hear Rohrabacher tell us why Courbet's rollicking, and decidedly lesbian-looking, women are glorious?," and repeatedly wonders what it would take to "get the sixty per cent we rarely hear from to write to their Senate and their Congress" in support of freedom of speech and the N.E.A. Through Oct. 7. (Cadman Plaza West at Front St., Brooklyn. Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

Museo del Barrio—In a show of works by mid-career Puerto Rican sculptors, Melquíades Rosario Sastre, the youngest, is by far the most compelling. His sculptures—of raw and smoothed wood, and, to a lesser extent, concrete and stone—are very modernistic and lyrical, somewhat in the organic spirit of Louise Bourgeois's work. Also appealing are some of Antonio Navia's pieces, which are of delicate and precise construction and are reminiscent of intricate ship models and electronic instruments. Through Oct. 14. . . . ¶ "Art Underground: A Public Art Project by Nitza Tufiño." A show of drawings, ceramic decorations, and two murals to be installed in the subway station at 103rd Street and Lexington Avenue this fall. The work is far less inspirational than the ceramic-tile decorations for the Broadway and 86th Street station that the artist did in collaboration with twelve secondary-school students. Through Sept. 16. (1230 Fifth Ave., at 104th St. Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

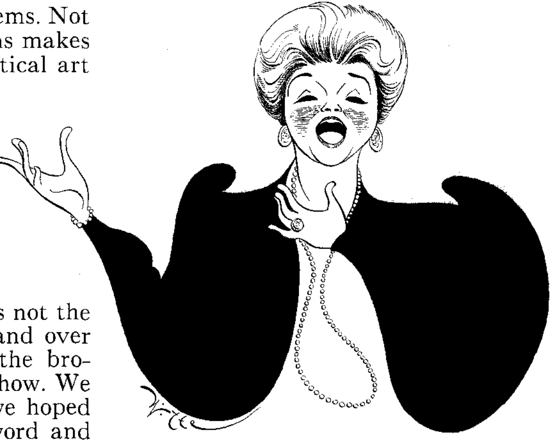
Lorna Simpson is the latest artist to be featured in the Museum of Modern Art's special "Projects" space. Her show there is typical of the photographic work for which she has been recognized and praised. Simpson takes on big issues: this is work that spotlights racism and sexism, and the way they infiltrate social systems. Not much art with these ambitions makes it into the mainstream—political art usually suffers the same invisibility as the subjects that provoke it. Which means that when an expression of injustice is embraced by individuals or institutions with power a difficult battle has been won. Simpson has been victorious in this respect. But worthiness is not the same as effectiveness. Over and over we found ourselves reading the brochure that accompanies the show. We were looking for something we hoped to find in her combines of word and image, but couldn't. The pieces are dead. One could argue that this lifelessness is part of their style, part of their point, but the work's didacticism adds to the impression that Simpson is an artist whose intentions are to be respected, not someone to watch.

Patrick Faigenbaum / Suzanne LaFont—Intriguingly stiff black-and-white photographs of Italian aristocrats, posing in their homes. Although the interiors are full of incredible art, furniture, and decorative splendors, the rigid positioning and posing of the subjects, as well as the use of black-and-white, make everything seem rather plain. These photographs are Old World in every sense. / Multipanelled black-and-white pieces, combining closeup profiles of various faces, that invite the viewer to project what's going on inside the subjects' heads. They're cinematic and photographic all at once—in a way, they're like New Wave mug shots. Through Sept. 7. (Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St.)

Félix Teynard (1817-92)—The Met has mounted a passionate show of thirty-five primarily architectural views of Egypt taken in 1851-1852 by this French civil engineer. The abundance of work, in itself, is a rare opportunity. At the time, each photograph was still an almost miraculous event—a laborious orchestration of all the elements that then went into making a permanent image with a camera. In these pictures you can feel how everything counted, how nothing about the process was taken for granted. The salted paper Teynard used has a marvellous delicacy compared with today's slicker, thicker papers, and it contributes to the over-all sense of awe and achievement. An ironic feature of this show is the inclusion of Teynard's photo of the Temple of Dendur—the very same monument that is now on view in the Museum's Sackler wing. Through Sept. 9. (Metropolitan Museum.)

"Photographers' Muses"—A show of seven very different photographers that provides generous examples of each artist's portrayal of his or her subject. It is a heavenly experience to see such a selection of Edward Weston's pictures of Charis Wilson, or Harry Callahan's loving shots of his wife, Eleanor, and daughter, Barbara, or—the surprise of the show—Fernand Fonssagrives on Lisa Fonssagrives. And to view the individual styles of three extraordinary photographers of glamour—Cecil Beaton, George Hurrell, and today's wild and wonderful Steven Meisel—is fascinating. For instance, the eighties and nineties punch and sense of sculptural form in Meisel's photos of Linda Evangelista contrast profoundly with Beaton's rather plain-Jane approach to Garbo. The seventh photographer is Sheila Metzner; with her inspiration, Rick Di Nome, she breaks the pattern of female muses that dominates in the history books and in this show. Through Aug. 24. (Danziger, 415 West Broadway. Closed Mondays.)

Short List—**marilyn bridges,** International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. (daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8, through Sept. 2); **lorna simpson,** Museum of Modern Art (daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9, through Aug. 16); **linnaeus tripe** and **suzanne opton,** Lowinsky, 584 Broadway (closed Mondays, open Saturdays. Through Aug. 31).



Marilyn Horne at Mostly Mozart

MUSIC

The standard line on the Wagner-Brahms controversy is that the oil and water of a century and more ago are today's butter and flour. When Joseph Joachim, Clara Schumann, Eduard Hanslick, Hugo Wolf, Bernard Shaw, and the rest were in the battlefield, it was not merely impossible to admire both composers but inappropriate to maintain a personal friendship with someone on the other side. We don't know who was the Henry of Navarre who eventually declared that it was possible to be saved in both confessions, but soon enough that view prevailed. Today, and for the past half-century at least, what esteemed Brahms conductor has not also been a fine Wagnerian? And what great Wagner singer has failed in the lieder of Brahms?

The two composers have something else, something odd, in common: as though the old battle had left a curse on both houses, an unusual number of important musicians have found Brahms and Wagner a permanently closed book. For example, when Spike Hughes wrote his book "The Toscanini Legacy," he had to disqualify himself in three cases, pleading inability to like the music: Wagner, Brahms, and their immediate successor Richard Strauss.

But in other ways the pair still differ: Wagner has been the subject of voluminous debate, analysis, commentary, and interdisciplinary study; Brahms, relatively, has not. Wagner claimed for music a larger place in the world of ideas, and addressed his age at large. Brahms addressed musicians intimately and intensely, and the worlds of letters and affairs not at all. Wagner, of course, spoke for the future and Brahms for Classicism and the past. Musicians have seen through this: one of Arnold Schoenberg's most famous essays is entitled, provocatively and with justification, "Brahms the Progressive." Still, the disparity remains.

All the more reason, then, to welcome the initiative of Bard College (in Annandale-on-Hudson) in sponsoring a two-weekend festival called "Rediscovering Brahms." Lectures, panel discussions, and concerts (with some most intriguing rarities by Brahms and his contemporaries) will run from August 17 through August 26. Call 1-914 758-2869 for information.

IN TOWN

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL—Aug. 13: The Moscow Virtuosi, with violinist-conductor Vladimir Spivakov and pianist Vladimir Viardo, in a program of Vivaldi, Haydn, and Mozart. . . . ¶ Aug. 14-15: Gerard Schwarz leads the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, and is joined by mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne in arias from Rossini's "Tancredi." . . . ¶ Aug. 16: The New York Chamber Soloists perform J. S. Bach concertos for one, two, three, and four harpsichords, with soloists Kenneth Cooper, Ed Brewer, Arthur Haas, and Elizabeth Metcalfe taking turns at the keyboards. . . . ¶ Aug. 17-18: Schubert's Mass in A-Flat and Mozart's "Requiem," with Gerard Schwarz conducting the festival orchestra and Joseph Flummerfelt directing the chorus and four soloists (soprano Faith Esham, mezzo-soprano Sarah Young, tenor John Aler, and bass Terry Cook). . . . ¶ Aug. 20: The Beaux Arts Trio plays chamber music by Mozart, Schubert, and Smetana. . . . ¶ Aug. 21-22: Neeme Järvi conducts the orchestra in Niels Gade's Fourth Symphony and Arvo Pärt's "Collage on B-A-C-H." The concert also includes two Mozart concertos, one with pianist Walter Klien and the other with violinist Leonidas Kavakos. (Avery Fisher Hall. 874-2424. Evenings at 8.)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—Final performances of this year's series of free outdoor concerts. **CENTRAL PARK'S GREAT LAWN,** Aug. 13: Valery Gergiev conducts Berlioz, Debussy, and Tchaikovsky. . . . **PELHAM BAY PARK,** the Bronx, Aug. 18: Zubin Mehta conducts Sibelius and William Schuman, and (with soloist Stanley Drucker) Mozart's Clarinet Concerto. . . . **CENTRAL PARK'S GREAT LAWN,** Aug. 20: In a salute (with fireworks) to the centennial of Carnegie Hall, Zubin Mehta conducts Sibelius and William Schuman, and is joined by Isaac Stern for Max Bruch's Violin Concerto. (Eve-

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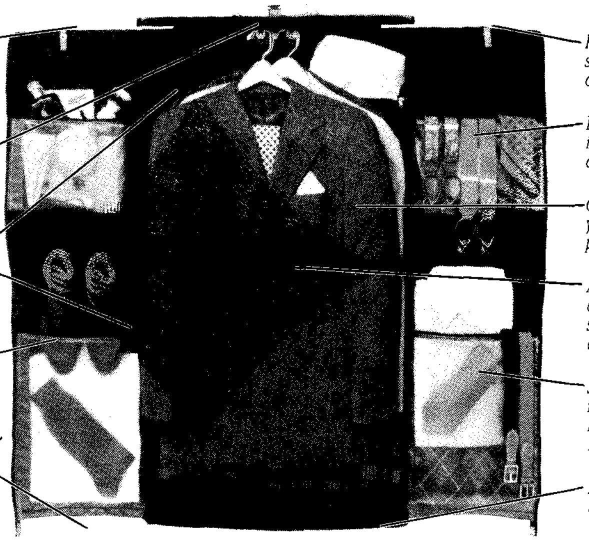

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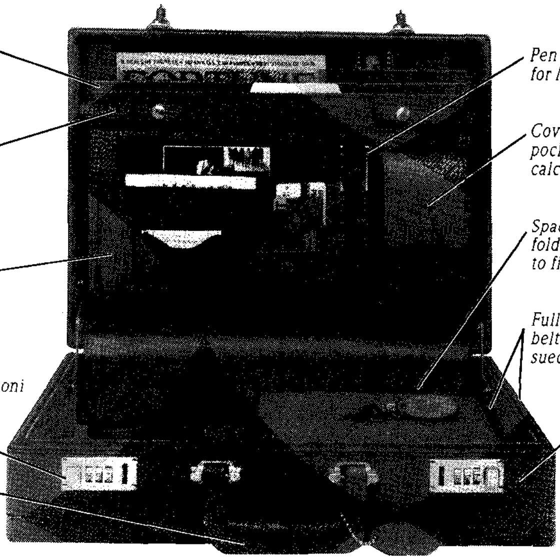

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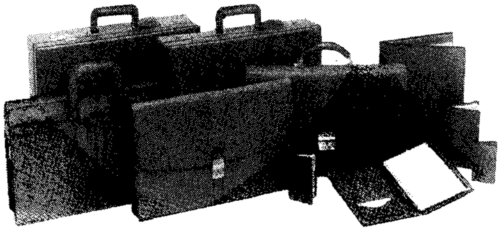

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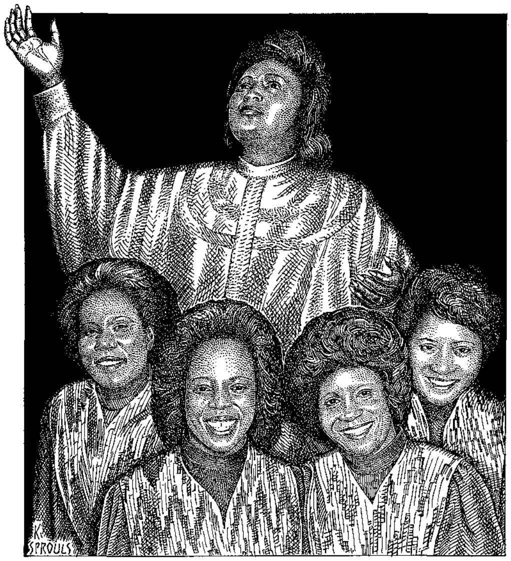
nings at 8. For rain-date information, call 580-8700, ext. 227.)

New York City Opera—**LE NOZZE DI FIGARO,** with Maureen O'Flynn, Renée Fleming, Cynthia Rose, Dean Peterson, and William Stone; conducted by Scott Bergeson. (Aug. 15 at 8.) . . . With Joan Gibbons, Madelyn Monti, Helene Schnerderman, Herbert Perry, and Kenneth Shaw; Scott Bergeson. (Aug. 19 at 2.) . . . **A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC,** with Sally Ann Howes, Regina Resnik, George Lee Andrews, Kevin Anderson, and Michael Maguire; Paul Gemignani. (Aug. 16 at 8.) . . . **LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR,** with Sheryl Woods, Paul Hartfield, James Dietsch, and Mark S. Doss; Louis Salemno. (Aug. 17 at 8.) . . . With Gail Dobish, Robert Brubaker, Mark Rucker, and Stefan Szkafarowsky; Louis Salemno. (Aug. 21 at 8.) . . . **CARMEN,** with Sharon Graham, Renée Fleming, John Absalom, and Gordon Hawkins; Hal France. (Aug. 18 at 2.) . . . **TOSCA,** with Edith Davis, Stefano Algieri, and Harry Dworchak; Louis Salemno. (Aug. 18 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)



Dorothy Love Coates & Her Singers at Central Park Summerstage

Bargemusic—Performing chamber music by Mozart and Brahms. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Aug. 16-17 at 7:30 and Aug. 19 at 4.)

OUT OF TOWN

Tanglewood—Aug. 14 at 8:30: Tanglewood conducting fellows will lead the festival orchestra in works by Beethoven, Berlioz, and Ravel, and Leonard Bernstein will conduct Copland's Third Symphony. . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 8:30: Leon Fleischer performs music by Scriabin, Bach/Brahms, and Strauss/ Godowsky for piano left-hand, and (with cellist Yo-Yo Ma and violinists Jaime Laredo and Joseph Silverstein) Korngold's rarely performed "Suite," Op. 23. . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 9: Charles Dutoit conducts the Boston Symphony in music by Richard Strauss and Frank Martin, and (with soloist Peter Serkin) in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 2. . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 8:30: The Boston Symphony, under Charles Dutoit, in music of Howard Hanson, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Prokofiev (his Third Piano Concerto, with soloist Yefim Bronfman). . . . ¶ Aug. 19 at 2:30: Leonard Bernstein conducts the Boston Symphony in music by Beethoven and Britten, plus his own "Arias and Barcarolles," with soloists Judy Kaye and Kurt Ollmann. . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 2:30: The annual "Tanglewood on Parade" program features offerings by resident student musicians, and a concert (at 8:30). Seiji Ozawa, André Previn, and John Williams take turns leading the Boston Symphony and Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra in the festive concert, which includes Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" (with pianist Christopher O'Riley), and ends with Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" and a display of fireworks. (Lenox, Mass. For information about tickets, call 1-413 637-1940.)

Caramoor Music Festival—The final concerts of the season—Aug. 17 at 9: Three-quarters of the Guarneri Quartet (violinist Arnold Steinhardt, violist Michael Tree, and cellist David Soyer) play Beethoven, and join forces with pianist Victor Steinhardt (Arnold's brother) for music by Brahms. . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 8:30: Baroque music and dance from France and Italy, with James Richman leading Concert Royal (an original-instrument chamber orchestra) and Catherine Turocy directing the New York Baroque Dance Company. . . . ¶ Aug. 19 at 5:30: The St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble plays a Beethoven string quartet and, with pianist Vladimir Feltsman, Brahms' F-Minor Piano Quintet and the world première of Nikolai Karetnikov's "Suite from Sholem Aleichem," for a chamber ensemble and a pianist who also reads aloud. (Katonah, N.Y. Buses for Caramoor will be at the Katonah station to meet trains leaving Grand Central on Saturdays at 2:50 and 5:30, and Sundays at 2:50. For information about tickets and trains, call 1-914 232-1252.)

JAZZ / POP / ROCK PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Chicago—A staple of adult-oriented-rock stations, Chicago, after more than twenty years on the pop charts, shows no signs of giving up. In the early to mid-seventies, their tunes—silly, bouncy, "horny" songs like "Saturday in the Park" and "Feelin' Stronger Every Day"—were perfect summer radio fodder. Now, however, the schmalz is over the top, their songs are written by others (Peter Cetera, who wrote and sang most of their seventies hits, left the band in 1985 for what he thinks is a solo career), and the generic nature of their sound has caught up with them. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Aug. 21-22 at 8.)

Cameo—With Basic Black. (Apollo Theatre. 253 W. 125th St. 864-0372. Aug. 14 at 8.)

Joan Armatrading—Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Aug. 14-15 at 8.

Little Feat—With Blues Traveler. (Palladium, 126 E. 14th St. 473-7171. Aug. 15-16 at 8.)

Damon Wayans—Apollo Theatre. Aug. 16 at 7:30.

Basia—With Ottmar Liebert and Luna Negra. (Radio City Music Hall. Aug. 16-17 at 8.)

Eric Clapton—His music, once sloppy and colorful, now comes packaged and designer wrapped, with expensive producers and sidemen inside. There's no doubt he'll be playing a good portion of his recent release "Journeyman," on his trademark "Clapton is God" guitar, but it's in mining the enormous musical fortunes of his past that he'll really shine. He needs the groove of a "Crossroads" to catch fire. (Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 422-9222. Aug. 17-18 at 8.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Mets—Vs. the Los Angeles Dodgers, Aug. 14-16 at 7:35.

Yankees—Vs. the Seattle Mariners, Aug. 17 at 7:30 and Aug. 18-19 at 1:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Toronto Blue Jays, Aug. 20-22 at 7:30.

(Home base for the Mets is Shea Stadium, 1-718 507-8499; and for the Yankees, Yankee Stadium, 293-6000.)

RACING

Horses—At Saratoga Springs: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1. The Travers is on Aug. 18, and the John A. Morris is on Aug. 19. Through Aug. 27. . . . At Monmouth Park, Oceanport, N.J.: Weekdays at 1:30. Through Sept. 1. . . . At the Atlantic City Race Course: Mondays and Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7:25. Through Sept. 1. . . . **TROTTING** at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights at 8, and Tuesdays at 1. . . . At the Meadowlands: Weeknights at 7:30. Through Aug. 18. . . . At Saratoga Raceway, Saratoga Springs: Mondays through Saturdays at 7:45.

TENNIS

Tournament of Champions—A warmup (for some) for the U.S. Open, Aug. 21-26 at the West Side Tennis Club, in Forest Hills. Expect to see Ivan Lendl, Jimmy Connors, Aaron Krickstein, and others. For information about tickets, call 1-718 268-6777.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Video Drive-in—Two programs of experimental and independent videos—by Laurie Anderson, Jenny Holzer, George Kuchar, Tom Rubnitz, Ellen Spiro, William Wegman, and others—on a big outdoor screen. (Rumsey Playground, mid-Park at 72nd Street. Aug. 14-15 at 8:30. No tickets necessary. For rain-date information, call 541-8423.)

Veggies, Flowers, and Plants—The City Gardeners' Harvest Fair is based on the county-fair model, only in this case the produce has been grown on fire escapes and rooftops, and in community gardens. A bluegrass band fills out the picture. (Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn. Aug. 18, from 11 to 6. For information and directions, call 233-2926.)

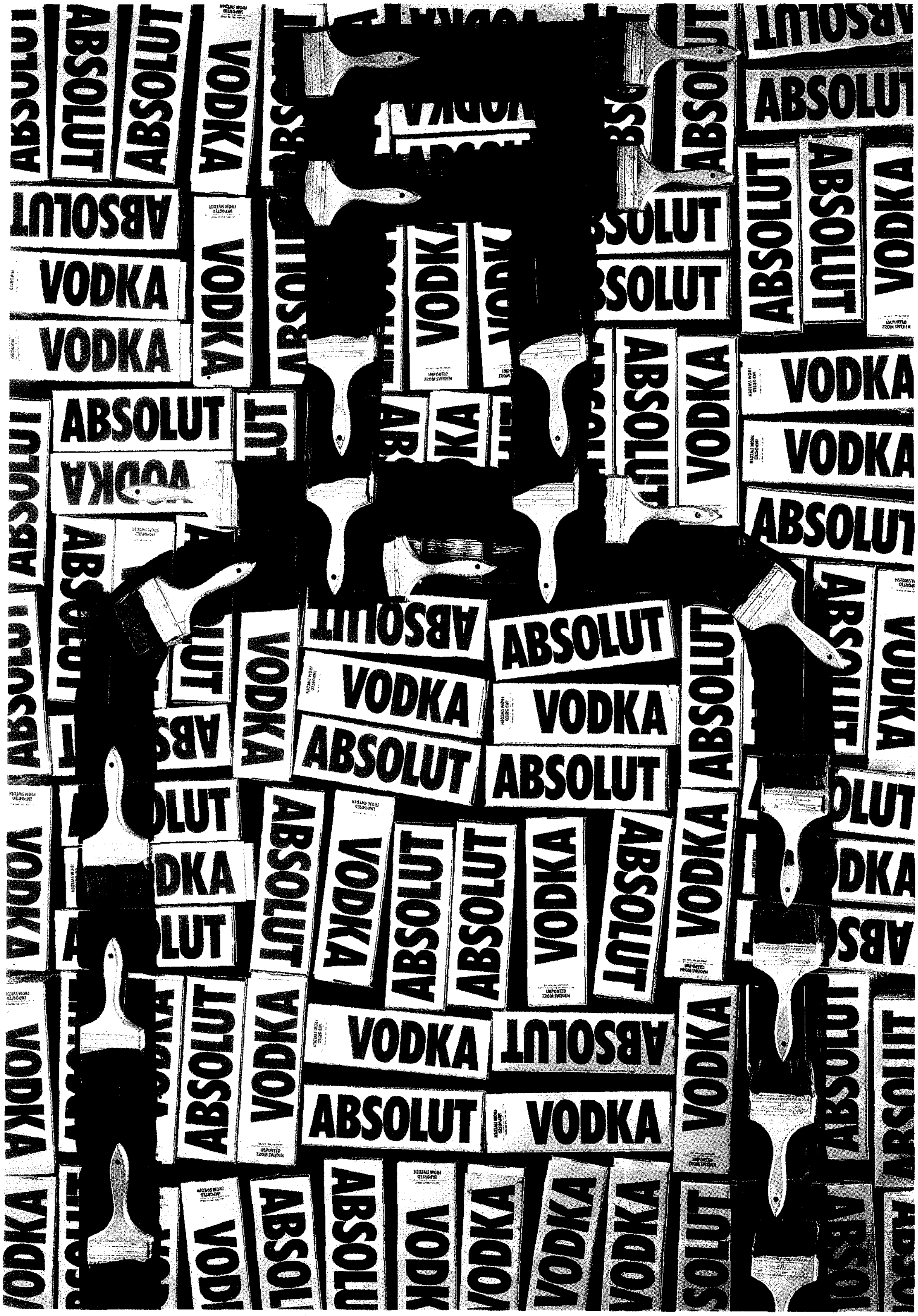
Freddie Hubbard—A "Musicruise" concert on a Circle Line boat. (Pier 81, Twelfth Ave. at 41st St. Aug. 17; boarding starts at 7 and 9:30. For information about tickets, call 956-5550.)

Billy Joel—The Piano Man is back, and he's once again writing the solid hitmaking material that has eluded him since 1983's "An Innocent Man." His recent chart-topping single, "We Didn't Start the Fire," has the punchy wring of this former boxer's best work. And his deservedly successful album "Storm Front" is full of strong melodies and hook-laden choruses—it's a songwriter's dream. As a singer, Joel has become one of the best in rock and roll, and in concert his passionate delivery is a knockout. (Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands. 1-201 935-3900. Aug. 18-19 at 8.)

Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors—Aug. 13 at 7:30: The New York Light Opera Company, Dave Frishberg, Illegitimate Music, Daryle Ryce, and Tom Paxton. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at noon: The Don Pullen trio. . . . At 5:30: The Peggy Spina Tap Company, with the Joel Forrester trio and Fred Strickler. . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 5:30: The Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre. . . . At 6:30: The Hemispheres. . . . At 8:15: Ko-Thi, African drummers and dancers. . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 5:30: New dance, with performances by, among others, the New York Baroque Dance Company. . . . At 6:30: New music. . . . At 8:15: Ko-Thi. . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 5:30: David Dorfman Dance. . . . At 7:30: The Dave Brubeck quartet, George Mgrdichian, Chico Hamilton, Buddy Collette, and Cary DeNigris. . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at noon: Mudman and others, sponsored by Creative Time. . . . At 2:30: The Hummingbird Carnival Dance Theatre of Trinidad. . . . At 5:30: Nehesu: Warriors of Sound. . . . At 8:15: The Merce Cunningham Dance Company. . . . ¶ Aug. 19 at 8:15: Eddie Palmieri and Yomo Toro. . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 5:30: Laurie Carlos and Don Meissner. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at noon: Marco Rizo and his Latin Jazz Quartet. . . . At 5:30: The Abel / Steinberg / Winant trio. . . . At 8:15: David Borden (the première of his "Angels, Visions, and Apparitions") and the Mother Mallard Ensemble. (Lincoln Center. No tickets necessary.)

Jones Beach Theatre—Aug. 15 at 8: Jimmy Buffett and the Coral Reefer Band. . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 8: Richard Marx. . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 6:30: The Newport Jazz Festival, with George Benson, Grover Washington, Jr., McCoy Tyner, Diane Schuur, Steps Ahead, and the Count Basie orchestra. . . . ¶ Aug. 19 at 6:30: The Newport Jazz Festival, with the Miles Davis trio, B. B. King, Dave Brubeck, Wynton Marsalis, and Spyro Gyra. (1-516 221-1000.)

Central Park Summerstage—Aug. 17 at 8:30: Ralph Lee and the Mattawee River Company, and Steve Elson's Lips and Fingers Ensemble. . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 3: The Reverend **CLAUDE JETER,** a New Yorker whose trademark falsetto has been appropriated by everyone from the Temptations to the Four Seasons, joins up with his old group, the **SWAN SILVERTONES,** to bring us a gospel-filled afternoon in Central Park. Singer **DOROTHY LOVE COATES,** a Birmingham, Alabama, resident who first retired more than thirty years ago, travels north to round out the double bill. In New York, gospel-music performances outside the churches draw a great mix of religious folks, urban hippies, and homesick Southerners, among others, and even nonbelievers can feel the transcendent emotion in this music. . . . ¶ Aug. 19 at 3: Bo Dollis and the Wild Magnolias, and the Rebirth Brass Band. (Rumsey Playground, mid-Park at 72nd St. No tickets necessary. For rain-date information, call 360-2777.)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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22			

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 20.

"Wild at Heart" composer Angelo Badalamenti

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "Jesus of Montreal" (directed by Denys Arcand; in French), with Lothaire Bluteau.
Theatre 2: "The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Unbelievable Truth" (Hal Hartley), with Robert Burke, Adrienne Shelly, and Christopher Cooke.
Theatre 4: "The Two Jakes" (Jack Nicholson), with Nicholson, Harvey Keitel, Meg Tilly, and Madeleine Stowe.
Theatre 5: "How to Make Love to a Negro Without Getting Tired" (Jacques W. Benoit; in French), with Isaach De Bankolé.
Theatre 6: Through Aug. 16: "The Two Jakes." From Aug. 17: "Wild at Heart" (David Lynch), with Nicolas Cage, Laura Dern, and Diane Ladd.

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Aug. 14-15: "The Rules of the Game" (1939, Jean Renoir; in French), with Marcel Dalio and Nora Gregor; "Boudu Saved from Drowning" (1931, Renoir; in French), with Michel Simon and Charles Grandval; and "On Purge Bébé" (1931, Renoir; in French, no English subtitles).
Aug. 16-17: "The Rules of the Game"; "La Chienne" (1931, Jean Renoir; in French), with Michel Simon; and "Catherine" (1924, Renoir; silent).
Aug. 18-19: "The Rules of the Game"; "Eléna et les Hommes" (1956, Jean Renoir; in French), with Ingrid Bergman, Jean Marais, Mel Ferrer, and Juliette Greco; and "French Cancan" (1954, Renoir; in French), with Jean Gabin.
From Aug. 21: "The Rules of the Game"; "A Day in the Country" (1937, Jean Renoir; in French), with Gabriello, Jeanne Marken, and Sylvia Bataille; and "La Grande Illusion" (1937, Renoir; in French), with Erich von Stroheim, Jean Gabin, Pierre Fresnay, and Marcel Dalio.

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "The Freshman" (†).
Theatre 2: "Presumed Innocent" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Aug. 16: "The Freshman" (†). From Aug. 17: "My Blue Heaven" (Herbert Ross), with Steve Martin, Rick Moranis, and Joan Cusack.

Bijou Cinema, 3rd Ave. between 12th and 13th. (503-7320)
"Mo' Better Blues" (†).

Loews 19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "The Freshman" (†).
Theatre 2: "Air America" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Mel Gibson and Robert Downey, Jr.
Theatre 3: "Ghost" (†).
Theatre 4: "Presumed Innocent" (†).
Theatre 5: "The Two Jakes" (Jack Nicholson), with Nicholson, Harvey Keitel, Meg Tilly, and Madeleine Stowe.
Theatre 6: "Arachnophobia" (†).

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
Through Aug. 16: (Matinées only) "Ducktales, The Movie: Treasure of the Lost Lamp" (Bob Hathcock), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Longtime Companion" (Norman René), with Bruce Davison, Mark Lamos, Campbell Scott, and Stephen Caffrey.
From Aug. 17: "Taking Care of Business" (Arthur Hiller), with James Belushi.

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
"Die Hard 2" (Renny Harlin), with Bruce Willis.

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "Ghost" (†).
Theatre 2: "Mo' Better Blues" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Two Jakes" (Jack Nicholson), with Nicholson, Harvey Keitel, Meg Tilly, and Madeleine Stowe.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"Presumed Innocent" (†).

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
"Total Recall" (†).

Sutton I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 16: "Pretty Woman" (†). From Aug. 17: "My Blue Heaven" (Herbert Ross), with Steve Martin, Rick Moranis, and Joan Cusack.
Theatre 2: "Arachnophobia" (†).

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"Young Guns II" (Geoff Murphy), with Emilio Estevez, Kiefer Sutherland, Lou Diamond Phillips, and Christian Slater.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Chicago Joe and the Showgirl" (Bernard Rose), with Kiefer Sutherland and Emily Lloyd.

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Days of Thunder" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 16: (Matinées only) "Ducktales, The Movie: Treasure of the Lost Lamp" (Bob Hathcock), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Another 48 Hrs." (Walter Hill), with Eddie Murphy and Nick Nolte. From Aug. 17: "The Exorcist III: Legion" (William Peter Blatty), with George C. Scott and Ed Flanders.

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Flatliners" (Joel Schumacher), with Kiefer Sutherland, Julia Roberts, Kevin Bacon, William Baldwin, and Oliver Platt.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Die Hard 2" (Renny Harlin), with Bruce Willis.
Theatre 2: "Mo' Better Blues" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "Presumed Innocent" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 16: "Dick Tracy" (†). From Aug. 17: "Taking Care of Business" (Arthur Hiller), with James Belushi.
Theatre 3: "Quick Change" (†).

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "Air America" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Mel Gibson and Robert Downey, Jr.
Theatre 2: "The Freshman" (†).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
Through Aug. 16: "Problem Child" (Dennis Dugan), with John Ritter.
From Aug. 17: "Wild at Heart" (David Lynch), with Nicolas Cage, Laura Dern, and Diane Ladd.

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "The Two Jakes" (Jack Nicholson), with Nicholson, Harvey Keitel, Meg Tilly, and Madeleine Stowe.
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 21: "The Two Jakes." From Aug. 22: "Pump Up the Volume" (Allan Moyle), with Christian Slater.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"Presumed Innocent" (†).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Ghost" (†).

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
"The Two Jakes" (Jack Nicholson), with Nicholson, Harvey Keitel, Meg Tilly, and Madeleine Stowe.

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: "Mo' Better Blues" (†).
Theatre 2: "Flatliners" (Joel Schumacher), with Kiefer Sutherland, Julia Roberts, Kevin Bacon, William Baldwin, and Oliver Platt.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 16: (Matinées only) "Ducktales, The Movie: Treasure of the Lost Lamp" (Bob Hathcock), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Pretty Woman" (†). From Aug. 17: "My Blue Heaven" (Herbert Ross), with Steve Martin, Rick Moranis, and Joan Cusack.
Theatre 2: "Arachnophobia" (†).

WEST SIDE

Bleecker Street Cinema I and 2, 144 Bleecker St. (674-2560)
Theatre 1: "Ariel" (directed by Aki Kaurismäki; in Finnish).
Theatre 2: "Men in Love" (Marc Huestis).

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "Flatliners" (Joel Schumacher), with Kiefer Sutherland, Julia Roberts, Kevin Bacon, William Baldwin, and Oliver Platt.
Theatre 2: "Die Hard 2" (Renny Harlin), with Bruce Willis.

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
"Air America" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Mel Gibson and Robert Downey, Jr.

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "Mo' Better Blues" (†).
Theatre 2: "Ghost" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 16: "Life Is a Long Quiet River" (Etienne Chatiliez; in French). From Aug. 17: "Taking Care of Business" (Arthur Hiller), with James Belushi.
Theatre 2: "Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!" (†).
Theatre 3: "Cinema Paradiso" (Giuseppe Tornatore; in Italian), with Philippe Noiret and Salvatore Cascio.
Theatre 4: (Matinées only) "The Jungle Book" (1967), a full-length Walt Disney cartoon; and (evenings only) "Dick Tracy" (†).

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "Problem Child" (Dennis Dugan), with John Ritter.
Theatre 2: "Young Guns II" (Geoff Murphy), with Emilio Estevez, Kiefer Sutherland, Lou Diamond Philips, and Christian Slater.
Theatre 3: "Mo' Better Blues" (†).
Theatre 4: "Die Hard 2" (Renny Harlin), with Bruce Willis.
Theatre 5: "Flatliners" (Joel Schumacher), with Kiefer Sutherland, Julia Roberts, Kevin Bacon, William Baldwin, and Oliver Platt.
Theatre 6: "Mo' Better Blues" (†).
Theatre 7: Through Aug. 16: "Quick Change" (†). From Aug. 17: "My Blue Heaven" (Herbert Ross), with Steve Martin, Rick Moranis, and Joan Cusack.
Theatre 8: Through Aug. 16: "Die Hard 2." From Aug. 17: "Wild at Heart" (David Lynch), with Nicolas Cage, Laura Dern, and Diane Ladd.
Theatre 9: "Young Guns II."

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "Dick Tracy" (†).
Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "Jetsons: The Movie" (William Hanna and Joseph Barbera), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Pretty Woman" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Aug. 21: (Matineés only) "The Jungle Book" (1967), a full-length Walt Disney cartoon; and (evenings only) "Navy SEALs" (Lewis Teague), with Charlie Sheen and Michael Biehn. From Aug. 22: "Pump Up the Volume" (Allan Moyle), with Christian Slater.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)

"Ducktales, The Movie: Treasure of the Lost Lamp" (Bob Hathcock), an animated film.

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)

Theatre 1: Through Aug. 16: "Problem Child" (Dennis Dugan), with John Ritter. From Aug. 17: A festival of films from Latin America.

Theatre 2: "Twisted Obsession" (Fernando Trueba), with Jeff Goldblum.

Theatre 3: Through Aug. 16: "Betsy's Wedding" (Alan Alda), with Alda, Madeline Kahn, Joe Pesci, and Molly Ringwald. From Aug. 17: A festival of films from Latin America.

Theatre 4: Through Aug. 16: (Matinées only) "Jetsons: The Movie" (William Hanna and Joseph Barbera), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Ghost Dad" (Sidney Poitier), with Bill Cosby. From Aug. 17: "Wild at Heart" (David Lynch), with Nicolas Cage, Laura Dern, and Diane Ladd.

Theatre 5: "Mo' Better Blues" (†).

Theatre 6: "Pretty Woman" (†).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)

"Flatliners" (Joel Schumacher), with Kiefer Sutherland, Julia Roberts, Kevin Bacon, William Baldwin, and Oliver Platt.

Loews Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)

"The Freshman" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)

"Life Is a Long Quiet River" (Etienne Chatiliez; in French).

Carnegie Hall Cinema, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)

"The Unbelievable Truth" (Hal Hartley), with Robert Burke, Adrienne Shelly, and Christopher Cooke.

Carnegie Screening Room, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (757-2131)

"Men in Love" (Marc Huestis).

Paris, 4 W. 58th. (688-2013)

"Metropolitan" (Whit Stillman), with Edward Clements, Carolyn Farina, Christopher Eigeman, and Taylor Nichols.

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)

(Matinées only) "The Jungle Book" (1967), a full-length Walt Disney cartoon; and (evenings only) "Navy SEALs" (Lewis Teague), with Charlie Sheen and Michael Biehn.

Loews Paramount, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)

"Ghost" (†).

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)

"Young Guns II" (Geoff Murphy), with Emilio Estevez, Kiefer Sutherland, Lou Diamond Phillips, and Christian Slater.

Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)

Theatre 1: "Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!" (†).

Theatre 2: "Cinema Paradiso" (Giuseppe Tornatore; in Italian), with Philippe Noiret and Salvatore Cascio.

Theatre 3: "May Fools" (†).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)

"Mo' Better Blues" (†).

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)

Theatre 1: Through Aug. 21: "Arachnophobia" (†). From Aug. 22: "Pump Up the Volume" (Allan Moyle), with Christian Slater.

Theatre 2: Through Aug. 16: "The Freshman" (†). From Aug. 17: "My Blue Heaven" (Herbert Ross), with Steve Martin, Rick Moranis, and Joan Cusack.

Theatre 3: "The Two Jakes" (Jack Nicholson), with Nicholson, Harvey Keitel, Meg Tilly, and Madeleine Stowe.

Theatre 4: Through Aug. 16: "Navy SEALs" (Lewis Teague), with Charlie Sheen and Michael Biehn. From Aug. 17: "Wild at Heart" (David Lynch), with Nicolas Cage, Laura Dern, and Diane Ladd.

Theatre 5: "Presumed Innocent" (†).

Theatre 6: "Air America" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Mel Gibson and Robert Downey, Jr.

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)

Theatre 1: "Problem Child" (Dennis Dugan), with John Ritter.

Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "Ducktales, The Movie: Treasure of the Lost Lamp" (Bob Hathcock), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Pretty Woman" (†).

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)

Theatre 1: "Die Hard 2" (Renny Harlin), with Bruce Willis.

Theatre 2: "Flatliners" (Joel Schumacher), with Kiefer Sutherland, Julia Roberts, Kevin Bacon, William Baldwin, and Oliver Platt.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)

Theatre 1: "Air America" (directed by Roger Spottiswoode), with Mel Gibson and Robert Downey, Jr.

Theatre 2: "Young Guns II" (Geoff Murphy), with Emilio Estevez, Kiefer Sutherland, Lou Diamond Phillips, and Christian Slater.

Theatre 3: "Total Recall" (†).

Theatre 4: "Die Hard 2" (Renny Harlin), with Bruce Willis.

Theatre 5: "Presumed Innocent" (†).

Theatre 6: "Air America."

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)

Through Aug. 16: "Dick Tracy" (†).

From Aug. 17: "Taking Care of Business" (Arthur Hiller), with James Belushi, Charles Grodin, Anne DeSalvo, and Mako.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)

Theatre 1: "Arachnophobia" (†).

Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "The Jungle Book" (1967), a full-length Walt Disney cartoon; and (evenings only) "RoboCop 2" (Irvin Kershner), with Peter Weller.

Theatre 3: Through Aug. 16: "Navy SEALs" (Lewis Teague), with Charlie Sheen and Michael Biehn. From Aug. 17: "Dick Tracy" (†).

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)

"The Two Jakes" (Jack Nicholson), with Nicholson, Harvey Keitel, Meg Tilly, and Madeleine Stowe.

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (969-0950)

Theatre 1: "Problem Child" (Dennis Dugan), with John Ritter.

Theatre 2: "Mo' Better Blues" (†).

West Side Cinema 1 and 2, 7th Ave. at 48th. (398-1720)

Theatre 1: "The Freshman" (†).

Theatre 2: Through Aug. 16: (Matinées only) "Ducktales, The Movie: Treasure of the Lost Lamp" (Bob Hathcock), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Quick Change" (†). From Aug. 17: "My Blue Heaven" (Herbert Ross), with Steve Martin, Rick Moranis, and Joan Cusack.

REVIVAL HOUSES

Biograph Cinema, 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)

Through Aug. 14: "Brigadoon" (1954, directed by Vincente Minnelli), with Gene Kelly, Van Johnson, and Cyd Charisse; and "Kismet" (1955, Minnelli), with Howard Keel and Ann Blyth.

Aug. 15-18: "My Fair Lady" (1964, George Cukor), with Audrey Hepburn and Rex Harrison.

Aug. 19-20: "Sally" (1929, John Francis Dillon), with Marilyn Miller, Alexander Gray, Joe E. Brown, and Pert Kelton; and "Good News" (1930, Nick Grinde and Edgar J. McGregor), with Bessie Love.

Aug. 21-22: "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" (†); and "Something for the Boys" (1944, Lewis Seiler), with Carmen Miranda, Michael O'Shea, and Perry Como.

Cinema Village, 22 W. 12th. (924-3363)

Through Aug. 14: "State of Siege" (1973, Costa-Gavras; in French), with Yves Montand; and "Music Box" (1989, Costa-Gavras), with Jessica Lange.

Aug. 15-16: "Straight Through the Heart" (1983, Doris Dörrie; in German); and "Rosalie Goes Shopping" (1990, Percy Adlon), with Marianne Sägebrecht.

Aug. 17-18: "Glory" (1989, Edward Zwick), with Matthew Broderick, Denzel Washington, Morgan Freeman, and Cary Elwes; and "The Red Badge of Courage" (†).

Aug. 19: "Camille" (1937, George Cukor), with Greta Garbo, Robert Taylor, and Henry Daniell; and "Grand Hotel" (1932, Edmund Goulding), with Garbo.

Aug. 20-21: "The Time of the Gypsies" (1990, Emir Kusturica); and "When Father Was Away on Business" (1985, Kusturica).

From Aug. 22: "Mala Noche" (†); and three short films by Terrence Davies.

Thalia SoHo, 15 Vandam St. (675-0498)

Through Aug. 14: "The Lady from Shanghai" (1948, Orson Welles), with Rita Hayworth, Welles, and Everett Sloane; and "In a Lonely Place" (1950, Nicholas Ray), with Humphrey Bogart and Gloria Grahame.

Aug. 15-16: "Rich and Strange" (1932, Alfred Hitchcock), with Henry Kendall; and "The Ring" (1927, Hitchcock).

Aug. 17-18: "The Falls" (1980, Peter Greenaway); and "Verticle Features Remake" (1978, Greenaway).

Aug. 19: "Rififi" (1955, Jules Dassin; in French), with Jean Servais, Robert Manuel, Carl Mohner, and Dassin; and "Panique" (†).

Aug. 20-21: "Angel Heart" (1987, Alan Parker), with Mickey Rourke, Robert De Niro, Lisa Bonet, and Charlotte Rampling; and "Don't Look Now" (1973, Nicolas Roeg), with Julie Christie and Donald Sutherland.

From Aug. 22: "The Go-Between" (1971, Joseph Losey), with Julie Christie, Alan Bates, Margaret Leighton, and Michael Redgrave; and "The L-Shaped Room" (1963, Bryan Forbes), with Leslie Caron and Tom Bell.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)

Aug. 13: "Ecstasy" (1933, Gustav Machaty; in Czech), with Hedy Lamarr; and "Algiers" (1938, John Cromwell), with Lamarr and Charles Boyer.

Aug. 14: "The Big Heat" (1953, Fritz Lang), with Glenn Ford, Gloria Grahame, Alexander Scourby, and Lee Marvin; and "Beyond a Reasonable Doubt" (1956, Lang), with Dana Andrews and Joan Fontaine.

Aug. 15: "The Cat and the Canary" (1939, Elliott Nugent), with Paulette Goddard, Bob Hope, John Beal, and Douglass Montgomery; and "The Old Dark House" (1932, James Whale), with Charles Laughton, Melvyn Douglas, Raymond Massey, Boris Karloff, and Gloria Stuart.

Aug. 16: "Mr. Arkadin" (1955, Orson Welles), with Welles, Michael Redgrave, Patricia Medina, and Akim Tamiroff; and "The Stranger" (†).

Aug. 17-18: "Notorious" (†); and "Spellbound" (1945, Alfred Hitchcock), with Ingrid Bergman, Gregory Peck, Michael Chekhov, John Emery, and Leo G. Carroll.

Aug. 19: "A Streetcar Named Desire" (1951, Elia Kazan), with Vivien Leigh, Marlon Brando, Kim Hunter, and Karl Malden; and "The Long, Hot Summer" (1958, Martin Ritt), with Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, and Orson Welles.

Aug. 20: "October" (†); and "Potemkin" (1925, Sergei Eisenstein; silent).

Aug. 21: "The Postman Always Rings Twice" (1946, Tay Garnett), with Lana Turner, John Garfield, Cecil Kellaway, Hume Cronyn, and Leon Ames; and "The Bad and the Beautiful" (1953, Vincente Minnelli), with Turner and Kirk Douglas.

Aug. 22: "Performance" (1970, Donald Cammell and Nicolas Roeg), with Mick Jagger and James Fox; and "Don't Look Now" (1973, Nicolas Roeg), with Julie Christie and Donald Sutherland.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—Aug. 13 at noon: "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" (1953, directed by Howard Hawks), with Marilyn Monroe, Jane Russell, and Charles Coburn. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 3: "All About Eve" (1950, Joseph L. Mankiewicz), with Bette Davis, Anne Baxter, George Sanders, and Gary Merrill. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 6: "The Model and the Marriage Broker" (1951, George Cukor), with Jeanne Crain, Thelma Ritter, and Michael O'Shea. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at noon: "Decision Before Dawn" (1951, Anatole Litvak), with Richard Basehart, Gary Merrill, and Hildegarde Neff. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 3: "Don't Bother to Knock" (1952, Roy Baker), with Richard Widmark, Marilyn Monroe, and Anne Bancroft. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 6: "Five Fingers" (1952, Joseph L. Mankiewicz), with James Mason, Danielle Darrieux, and Michael Rennie. . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at noon: "Three Little Girls in Blue" (1947, H. Bruce Humberstone), with June Haver, Vivian Blaine, Vera-Ellen, and George Montgomery. . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 3: "The Robe" (1953, Henry Koster), with Richard Burton, Jean Simmons, and Victor Mature. . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 6: "Decision Before Dawn." . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at noon: "Five Fingers." . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 3: "How to Marry a Millionaire" (1953, Jean Negulesco), with Betty Grable, Marilyn Monroe, Lauren Bacall, and William Powell. . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 6: "Don't Bother to Knock." . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at noon: "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (1952, Henry King), with Gregory Peck, Susan Hayward, and Ava Gardner. . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 2:30: "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes." . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 5: "The Robe." . . . ¶ Aug. 19 at noon: "Three Blind Mice" (1938, William Seiter), with Loretta Young, Joel McCrea, and David Niven. . . . ¶ Aug.

MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

19 at 2:30: "Three Little Girls in Blue." . . . ¶ Aug. 19 at 5: "How to Marry a Millionaire" . . . ¶ Aug. 20 at noon: "The Girl on the Red Velvet Swing" (1955, Richard Fleischer), with Ray Milland, Joan Collins, and Farley Granger. . . . ¶ Aug. 20 at 3: "The Girl Can't Help It" (1956, Frank Tashlin), with Tom Ewell, Jayne Mansfield, Fats Domino, and Little Richard. . . . ¶ Aug. 20 at 6: "Carmen Jones" (1954, Otto Preminger), with Dorothy Dandridge, Harry Belafonte, Pearl Bailey, and Diahann Carroll. . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at noon: "The Best Things in Life Are Free" (1956, Michael Curtiz), with Gordon MacRae, Dan Dailey, Sheree North, and Ernest Borgnine. . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 3: "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 6 and Aug. 23 at noon: "Night People" (†).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Aug. 15 at 12:30 and 6: "Last Tango in Paris" (1972, Bernardo Bertolucci; in French), with Marlon Brando, Maria Schneider, Jean-Pierre Léaud, and Catherine Allégret. . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 3:15 and 8:45: "Loulou" (1980, Maurice Pialat; in French), with Gérard Depardieu, Isabelle Huppert, Guy Marchand, and Humbert Balsan. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 12:30 and 6: "Frantic" (1988, Roman Polanski), with Harrison Ford, Betty Buckley, John Mahoney, and Emanuelle Seigner. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 3:15 and 8:45: "Tchao Pantin" (1983, Claude Berri; in French), with Coluche, Richard Anconina, Anges Soral, and Philippe Léotard.

Museum of Broadcasting, 1 E. 53rd St. (752-7684)—"MB Playhouse," dramas shown on television over the past thirty years. Aug. 14-18: William Nicholson's "Shadowlands" (1985, BBC), with Joss Ackland and Claire Bloom. . . . From Aug. 21: Philip Mackie's "The Naked Civil Servant" (1975), with John Hurt. Showings Tuesdays at 3 and 6, Wednesdays through Fridays at 3, and Saturdays at 1.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (570-3949)—Aug. 18 at 4 and 6:30: "Mapantsula" (1988, Oliver Schmitz; in English, Zulu, Sotho, and Afrikaans).

Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., State Office Building, 163 W. 125th St. (873-5040)—Aug. 13 at 6: "Native Son" (1951, Pierre Chenal), with Richard Wright; and "A Raisin in the Sun" (1961, Daniel Petrie), with Sidney Poitier, Claudie McNeil, Ruby Dee, Diana Sands, and Ivan Dixon. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 1: "The Joe Louis Story" (1953, Robert Gordon), "The Nat (King) Cole Story" (1989), "The Jackie Robinson Story" (1950, Alfred Green), and "The Marvin Gaye Story" (1987). . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 6:30: "She's Gotta Have It" (1986, Spike Lee), with Tracy Camila Johns, Tommie Hicks, John Canada Terrell, Raye Dowell, and Lee; and "School Daze" (1987, Lee), with Larry Fishburne, Giancarlo Esposito, Joe Seneca, Tisha Campbell, Ossie Davis, and Lee. . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 2: "Nation-time, Gary" (1972, William Greaves), a documentary; "Frederick Douglass: An American Life" (1989, Greaves); and "Thurgood Marshall Speaks" (1988, Carl Rowan). . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 6: "The Education of Sonny Carson" (1974, Michael Campus), with Rony Clanton, Don Gordon, and Paul Benjamin; and "The Battle of Algiers" (1966, Gillo Pontecorvo). . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 1 and 4:25: "The Spook Who Sat by the Door" (1973, Ivan Dixon), with Lawrence Cook, Paula Kelly, and Janet League; and "Three the Hard Way" (1974, Gordon Parks, Jr.), with Jim Brown, Fred Williamson, Jim Kelly, and Sheila Frazier. . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 6:30: "A Dry White Season" (1989, Euzhan Palcy), with Zakes Mokae, Donald Sutherland, Jurgen Prochnow, and Marlon Brando; and "Sugar Cane Alley" (1983, Palcy), with Garry Cadenat. . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 1: "Do the Right Thing" (1989, Spike Lee), with Ossie Davis, Bill Nunn, Danny Aiello, Ruby Dee, Lee, and Joie Lee; "Making 'Do the Right Thing'" (1989, St. Claire Bourne), a documentary; and "Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads" (1983, Lee). . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 7: "Lord Shango" (1974, Ray Marsh), with Lawrence Cook; and "The Spook Who Sat by the Door." Mr. Cook will be present at 8:30.

Anthology Film Archives, 32-34 Second Ave., at Second St. (477-2714)—Films showing in either the Courthouse Theatre or the Maya Deren Theatre. Aug. 16-19 at 6: "No Picnic" (1987, Philip Hartman). . . . ¶ Aug. 16-19 at 8: "The Territory" (1981, Raul Ruiz).

Film Society of Lincoln Center—A program of Italian films from the forties to the present. Most films in Italian, with English subtitles. Aug. 13 at 6:15: "Umberto D." (1951, Vittorio De Sica), with Carlo Battisti. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 8:30: "A Voyage to Italy" (1952, Roberto Rossellini), with Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 6:15: "I Vitelloni" (1953, Federico Fellini), with Franco Fabrizi and Alberto Sordi. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 8:30: "The Easy Life" (1963), Dino Risi), with Vittorio Gassman and Jean-Louis Trintignant. . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 6:15: "Accattone!" (1961, Pier Paolo Pasolini), with Franco Citti. . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 8:45: "Divorce—Italian Style" (1961, Pietro Germi), with Marcello Mastroianni, Daniela Rocca, Stefania Sandrelli, and Leopoldo Triste. . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 6:15: "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" (1967, Sergio Leone), with Clint Eastwood, Eli Wallach, and Lee Van Cleef. . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 9:30: "Big Deal on Madonna Street" (1958, Mario Monicelli), with Vittorio Gassman, Claudia Cardinale, and Totò. . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 6:15: "L'Avventura" (1960, Michelangelo Antonioni), with Monica Vitti. . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 9:15: "Salvatore Giuliano" (1961, Francesco Rosi). . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 1:30: "Before the Revolution" (1964, Bernardo Bertolucci). . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 4: "Hands Over the City" (1963, Francesco Rosi), with Rod Steiger. . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 6:15: "La Dolce Vita" (1959, Federico Fellini), with Marcello Mastroianni. . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 9:45: "The Hawks and the Sparrows" (1965, Pier Paolo Pasolini), with Totò and Ninetto Davoli. . . . ¶ Aug. 19 at 2: "Fists in the Pocket" (1965, Marco Bellocchio), with Lou Castel. . . . ¶ Aug. 19 at 4:15: "8½" (1963, Federico Fellini), with Marcello Mastroianni. . . . ¶ Aug. 19 at 7:15: "Seduced and Abandoned" (1963, Pietro Germi), with Stefania Sandrelli. . . . ¶ Aug. 19 at 9:45: "The Conformist" (1970, Bernardo Bertolucci), with Jean-Louis Trintignant, Stefania Sandrelli, and Dominique Sanda. . . . ¶ Aug. 20 at 6:15: "The Gospel According to St. Matthew" (1964, Pier Paolo Pasolini). . . . ¶ Aug. 20 at 9: "China Is Near" (1967, Marco Bellocchio). . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 6:15: "Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion" (1969, Elio Petri), with Gian Maria Volonte. . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 8:45: "Death in Venice" (1971, Luchino Visconti), with Dirk Bogarde. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 6:15: "Love and Anarchy" (1973, Lina Wertmüller), with Giancarlo Giannini and Mariangela Melato. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 8:45: "Padre Padrone" (1977, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani). (Alice Tully Hall. 362-1911.)

IN BRIEF

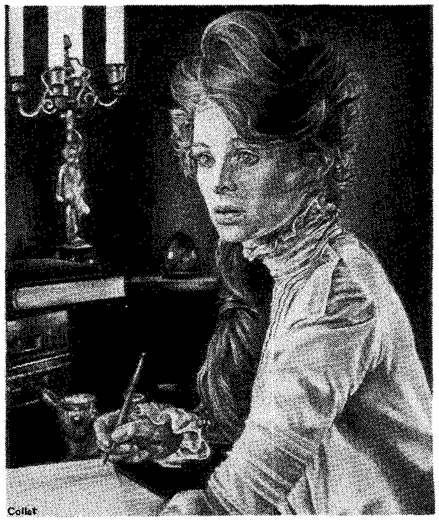
SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Terrence Rafferty.)

Arachnophobia—It's O.K. You don't feel suckered, though you don't feel elated, either. A deadly arachnid that is discovered in Venezuela kills a young photographer, crawls into his coffin, and travels from the Amazon to the fictional little town of Canaima, California. There, the hairy-legged intruder—a tarantula as big as a big guy's fist—breeds with a harmless domestic spider, and troops of poisonous bugs begin marching out of bathroom drains. But when it comes down to the basics of scare comedy the arachnids are short on personality, and so is the movie. The script, credited to Don Jakoby and Wesley Strick, has too many B-picture precursors, and the first-time director, Frank Marshall, is like a Boy Scout remaking "Jaws." The tricks and teases aren't hip enough to spook your imagination. Jeff Daniels is smooth as the doctor with the phobia, but his dread seems shallow. The doctor's wife (Harley Jane Kozak) is presented as the fearless, competent one; then she's dropped from view. *John Goodman, in the role of the local exterminator*, brings up the energy level; he gives the picture a shot of authentic American grunge. Also with Julian Sands as the uppity entomologist, Brian McNamara as his assistant, and Henry Jones and Mary Carver. The witless musical score, by Trevor Jones, is a flat-out insult.—P.K. (Loews 19th Street East 6, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, and Embassy. . . . ¶ Loews 84th Street Sixplex; through Aug. 21.)

The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover—A movie about a crude British thug, Albert Spica (Michael Gambon), whose favorite method of terrorizing people is ramming things down their throats. Albert himself eats only haute cuisine; he and his wife (Helen Mirren) dine every night at a posh restaurant called Le Hollandais. This is an Art Movie, refined and terribly formal; the director, Peter Greenaway (who also wrote the script), places this barbarian smack in the middle of "painterly" compositions and encourages us to see him as a steaming hunk of offal desecrating the beauty of an artist's creation. He looks at Albert with the disdainful stare that the pukka sahib directs at a servant who has inconvenienced him. Greenaway, however, has a lot more in common with his loutish protagonist than he thinks. He obviously regards himself as an aesthetic virtuoso, but he's just a cultural omnivore. (He chews with his mouth open—we can identify almost every piece of art that has fed his imagination.) The only thing in this movie's tidy, hermetic universe that Greenaway is unable to control, or disguise with fancy brushwork, is his loathing of the body. The movie features several gross-out scenes, including a climactic act of cannibalism; the Motion Picture Association of America gave it an X rating. (The distributors released it unrated.) What's offensive about the picture, though, isn't its violence or its visceral shocks but the patrician arrogance, the smug aestheticism, the snobbishness that suffuse every frame. Greenaway is an intellectual bully: he pushes us to the ground and kicks art in our faces. Also with Alan Howard (the Lover) and Richard Bohringer (the Cook). Cinematography by Sacha Vierny.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/7/90.) (Angelika Film Center.)

Days of Thunder—This new Tom Cruise vehicle, directed by Tony Scott, is the latest example of the nearly demagogic brand of pop-culture uplift practiced by the producers Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer. (They were also responsible for "Flashdance" and "Top Gun.") It's about winning, and nothing else. The setting this time is the stock-car racing circuit. The screenwriter, Robert Towne, seems to be trying to underplay the rah-rah elements of the material—to give competition some point other than pure ego gratification. And he supplies some nice dialogue: easy, natural-sounding macho banter among the drivers and their crews. But the movie has been stripped for speed: by the big race (the Daytona 500), all the ambiguities in the script have been removed, and there's noth-



At the Thalia SoHo, Julie Christie in "The Go-Between"

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ing to interfere with Cruise's, and the producers', streak to the finish line. Like the previous Simpson-Bruckheimer picture, it's designed—engineered, really—to give audiences an overdose of the thrill of victory; it wants us to jump out of our seats, pumping our fists in the air and roaring for the hero to pulverize his opponents. The racing sequences are very ordinary. Also with Robert Duvall, who gives a lively performance as the hero's mentor, and Michael Rooker, Nicole Kidman, Randy Quaid, and Cary Elwes.—T.R. (7/16/90) (Manhattan Twin.)

Dick Tracy—This isn't the kind of crass crowd-pleaser we've become accustomed to; its dullness is of the old-fashioned variety. Everything but the film's bold, striking comic-strip visual design (created by Richard Sylbert and photographed by Vittorio Storaro) is low-key. Warren Beatty directed and plays the title role. His performance is recessive almost to the point of perversity. In Chester Gould's comic strip, Dick Tracy always seemed like a tough, aggressive, no-nonsense guy; Beatty's Tracy is a ditherer. And his tentativeness as an actor here is matched by the dreamy, distracted quality of his direction. The picture has no drive; its style is less "Dick Tracy" than "Classics Illustrated." Its pleasant, lovingly detailed, and eye-filling. It's everything a movie can be except interesting. Some of the actors are fun to watch: Madonna, as Breathless Mahoney, vamps entertainingly; Glenne Headly does an expert spunky-gal turn as Tess Trueheart, the hero's long-suffering girlfriend; and Al Pacino, as a sleazy mobster named Big Boy Caprice, creates a memorable comic grotesque. Also with William Forsythe (Flattop), Dustin Hoffman (Mumbles), Mandy Patinkin (88 Keys), R. G. Armstrong (Pruneface), Paul Sorvino (Lips Manlis), Charlie Korsmo, Charles Durning, Estelle Parsons, Dick Van Dyke, and James Caan. The script is credited to Jim Cash and Jack Epps, Jr. (with the writer Bo Goldman listed as "special consultant"). Score by Danny Elfman; original songs by Stephen Sondheim.—T.R. (7/2/90) (23rd St. West Triplex. . . . ¶ Quad Cinema. Evenings only. . . . ¶ Cinema II, and Embassy 1; through Aug. 16. . . . ¶ Embassy; starting Aug. 17.)

Audie Murphy in "The Red Badge of Courage"

The Freshman—This comedy, written and directed by Andrew Bergman, wears its zaniness on its sleeve. The hero, Clark (Matthew Broderick), is a quiet young man from Vermont who has just entered the N.Y.U. film school. Within a few days of arriving in New York, he's making deliveries for an "importer" named Carmine Sabatini (Marlon Brando) and being treated like a member of Sabatini's family (or Family): Carmine's daughter (Penelope Ann Miller) has told her father that she wants to marry Clark, and the old man embraces him, with alarming enthusiasm, as "the son I never had." The movie is overinsistent and very erratic. When Bergman's jokes are good, they're sensational; when they're not so good, he repeats them again and again, as if they'd become funnier through familiarity. In this picture he has actors who play his sort of material to perfection. Miller and Bruno Kirby, as Carmine's fast-talking weaselly nephew, are hilariously unfazed by the family's criminal activities, and Broderick calibrates his reactions with remarkable comic dexterity. And Brando seems to be in a bizarre and wonderful world of his own. People in the movie keep staring at him and commenting on his resemblance to Don Corleone, and he plays along, parodying himself marvellously. In his scenes the movie seems less frantic; its lunacy takes on an air of serenity—a deeper, more inexplicable, and much funnier weirdness. Also with Paul Benedict, Maximilian Schell, B. D. Wong, and Bert Parks (belting out "Tequila" and Dylan's sardonic "Maggie's Farm" at a formal dinner).—T.R. (7/30/90) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Loews 19th Street East 6, Gemini, Loews Festival, and West Side Cinema. . . . ¶ Loews 84th Street Sixplex; through Aug. 16.)

Ghost—It sounds like a horror movie, but it's a romantic fairy tale. The scariest thing about it is its shamelessness. A young New York bank executive, Sam (Patrick Swayze), is killed, on the street, at a moment in his life when everything seems to be going his way. After his death, Sam sticks around, as a spirit (and Swayze stays onscreen, as a body). He attends his funeral; watches his beautiful girlfriend, Molly (Demi Moore), drift grief-stricken through the spectacular loft they had just moved into; and then devotes himself to protecting her from the people who killed him. Through a reluctant psychic (Whoopi Goldberg), he tries to communicate with Molly; later, an experienced ghost (Vincent Schiavelli) teaches him how to move objects and break stuff. In this movie, death is treated as if it were merely a form of disability, one of those handicaps we've seen people struggle bravely with in TV movies—something for the individual to triumph over, with will power, hard work, and love. This creamy-toned fantasy, directed by Jerry Zucker from a screenplay by Bruce Joel Rubin, certainly pushes the audience's emotional buttons. It's a twentysomething hybrid of "It's a Wonderful Life" and some of the gooier, more solemn episodes of "The Twilight Zone," and there's not a trace of wit or irony in it. Its images of death have a soothing banality, like a greeting-card message from the world beyond. Also with Tony Goldwyn and Rick Aviles.—T.R. (7/30/90) (Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews Tower East, Art Greenwich Twin, and Loews Paramount.)

Mala Noche (1986)—This first feature made in Portland, Oregon, by Gus Van Sant (his second was the 1989 "Drugstore Cowboy") is a story of romantic obsession, shot in 16 mm., mostly in black-and-white, and completed for $25,000. It's the story of Walt (Tim Streeter), a young clerk in a skid-row convenience store who falls hopelessly in love with a Mexican boy, a tease who accepts handouts from him but derides him as a "stupid faggot." Based on a short novel by the Oregon poet Walt Curtis, the movie has a wonderful fluid, grainy look—expressionist yet with an improvised feel. It has an authentic grungy beauty; at moments, it's reminiscent of Jean Genet's short film masterpiece "Un Chant d'Amour." The tease, Johnny, is played by Doug Cooeyate, an American Indian who doesn't speak Spanish. (His lines were dubbed.) The screenplay is by Van Sant; the (often hand-held) cinematography is by John Campbell.—P.K. (Cinema Village; starting Aug. 22.)

May Fools—Louis Malle's new film takes place in May, 1968, when, for a few chaotic weeks, French society seemed on the verge of remaking itself: students were rioting, workers were striking, and the country came to a standstill. The characters in this picture are far removed from the stirring street theatre of May, '68, but they're affected by it nonetheless. The setting is a shabby estate presided over by Milou (Michel Piccoli), a genial man in his sixties who lives the life of a lazy country sensualist: he keeps bees, browns in the sun, and gropes the housekeeper. On the sunny day when the story begins, his mother dies, and he summons the rest of the family for the funeral and the reading of the will. There's a sense that things are about to change, both on the large scale of French society and on the infinitely smaller one of Milou's life. Malle and his co-writer, Jean-Claude Carrière, use the upheaval of May, '68, very deftly: it intrudes on their comedy like distant thunder on a sunny day, but the threatened downpour of Meaning never develops—we get a cooling shower of light ironies instead. Piccoli gives one of the best performances of his long career: he's vigorous and radiantly good-humored. Although its charm sometimes feels a bit too easy, the film is enjoyable throughout. It just bounces along to the rhythm of its remarkable score, composed and played by the eighty-two-year-old jazz violinist Stéphane Grappelli; the movie, like the music, has a delicate swing to it. Also with Miou-Miou and Michel Duchaussoy. In French.—T.R. (7/16/90) (Lincoln Plaza.)

Mo' Better Blues—The hero of Spike Lee's film is a trumpet player named Bleek Gilliam (Denzel Washington), who is squarely in the tradition of obsessive, single-minded movie jazz musicians. Lee's script presents Bleek with a series of choices, about his love life, his artistic life, and the connections between them. The problem with the picture is that it doesn't frame the hero's choices so that we know what's at stake. And Lee doesn't seem to have thought through the role of the music. He has set the film in the present—in pointed contrast with other recent movies about jazz—but his attitude toward the music's relationship to contemporary culture is incoherent. The picture has a distracted, meandering quality. It leaves out all sorts of crucial information about the characters, and then, after two long hours, ends with a slick, evasive montage sequence: eight minutes of images of domestic bliss, with John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme" on the soundtrack. Denzel Washington's magnetism and intelligence keep the movie watchable even during its most aimless stretches, but the script doesn't allow him to shape the performance. Lee's filmmaking here is all notions and no shape: hard, fierce blowing, rather than real music. Also with Wesley Snipes, Joie Lee, Cynda Williams, Giancarlo Esposito, Dick Anthony Williams, John and Nicholas Turturro, and the late Robin Harris. Lee himself plays a comic lovable-sidekick role. The score is by Bill Lee (the director's father), and the music of Bleek's quintet is played by the Branford Marsalis Quartet, with Terence Blanchard as the trumpet soloist.—T.R. (8/13/90) (Bijou Cinema, Loews 34th Street Showplace, Coronet, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, Regency, and National Twin.)

Night People (1954)—It's set in Berlin: a United States soldier is kidnapped; he is rescued by a U.S. intelligence officer (Gregory Peck) who knows how to deal with the Russians. They are "a methodical bunch of lice" and "head-hunting cannibals." That's the level of the film's anti-Communism; it's simply a reworking of the anti-Nazism of the previous era. Nunnally Johnson, who wrote the screenplay and produced and directed this melodrama, referred to it as "Dick Tracy in Berlin." Efficiently put together, on a large scale, the film is basically part of America's public-relations romance with itself. With Broderick Crawford, Anita Björk, Buddy Ebsen, Rita Gam, Walter Abel, Jill Esmond, and Peter Van Eyck.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Aug. 21 and 23.)

Notorious (1946)—Alfred Hitchcock's amatory thriller stars Ingrid Bergman as the daughter of a Nazi, a shady lady who trades secrets and all sorts of things with American agent Cary Grant. The suspense is terrific: will suspicious, passive Grant succeed in making Bergman seduce him, or will he take over? The honor of the American male is saved by a hairbreadth, but Bergman is literally ravishing in what is probably her sexiest performance. Great trash, great fun. With Claude Rains, Louis Calhern, Madame Konstantin, and Reinhold Schunzel. Script by Ben Hecht; cinematography by Ted Tetzlaff; music by Roy Webb.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Aug. 17-18.)

October (1927; also called "Ten Days That Shook the World")—Eisenstein followed "Potemkin," made in 1925, with this epic celebrating the ten days in 1917 during which the Bolsheviks overthrew the Kerensky government. It continues his striking experimental methods—the violent juxtapositions, the use of visual symbols to communicate abstract ideas, and the concept of the masses as hero. The movie also has a niche in the history of political falsification: the Soviet government commissioned the film for the tenth anniversary of the Revolution, but it was not shown. Trotsky was one of the main characters in Eisenstein's original version, and Trotsky at the time was organizing demonstrations against the Communist Party; Eisenstein had to spend five months reëditing the work to dislodge Trotsky from his place in the making of the Revolution. Even this edited version was later banned, as "formalist." Maybe because of the pressures Eisenstein experienced, the film lacks excitement, and it may leave you cold. (It's almost impossible to feel cold about "Potemkin.") Eisenstein's 1924 film, his brutal, bloody "Strike," has a charge and a sense of a new direction. The satire in "October" is heavy-handed, and its visual puns are too simple-minded; it seems already the end of his youthful, revolutionary period. Silent.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Aug. 20.)

Presumed Innocent—A ponderous adaptation of Scott Turow's cunningly plotted mystery novel. The director, Alan J. Pakula, has shot and paced the movie as if it weren't a mystery but a serious character study, an art film. It's lit (by Gordon Willis) like "Cries and Whispers," only without the bright-red accents: the movie's palette seems to consist of brown and gray—earnest, business-suit colors. The lunacy of treating this story as a deep exploration of character is that the only thing we really want to know about the character in question—Rusty Sabich (Harrison Ford), a Midwestern prosecutor accused of murdering one of his colleagues (Greta Scacchi)—is: Did he do it or not? Ford, in what is probably an unplayable role, has to maintain a tense, repressed, impenetrable expression throughout. The supporting actors provide the picture with a bit of energy. Bonnie Bedelia, as Rusty's nervous, self-deprecating wife, gives lovely shadings to a tough part. As the judge presiding over Rusty's trial, Paul Winfield supplies some sorely needed comedy. And Raul Julia, as the hero's lawyer, is an elegant, commanding presence in the courtroom scenes. Also with Brian Dennehy. Screenplay by Pakula and Frank Pierson.—T.R. (8/13/90) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Loews 19th Street East 6, 34th St. East, Cinema I, 68th St. Playhouse, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Pretty Woman—The lovers in this romantic comedy, directed by Garry Marshall, are a long-legged, golden-hearted Hollywood Boulevard hooker (Julia Roberts) and a cold, suave corporate raider (Richard Gere). He buys her tasteful (expensive) clothes and shows her how to act "classy"; she opens—in order—his wallet, his fly, and his heart. The only real distinction of this long and rather uneventful diversion is the radical contrast between the stars' performing styles. Roberts is all ebullience and scattershot charm. The kind word for Gere's style is minimal. He's opaque, stubbornly remote; he seems to have faxed his performance in. At its worst, the movie is just unimaginative; at its best, it's pleasant and competent. It's business-as-usual entertainment. Also with Jason Alexander, Laura San Giacomo, Ralph Bellamy, and Hector Elizondo. The screenplay is by J. F. Lawton.—T.R. (Worldwide Cinemas. . . . ¶ 23rd St. West Triplex, and Metro Cinema. Evenings only. . . . ¶ Sutton; through Aug. 16. . . . ¶ 86th Street East Twin; through Aug. 16, evenings only.)

Quick Change—Bill Murray plays Grimm, a fed-up New York City bureaucrat who dresses up as a clown to rob a midtown bank. After Grimm has ditched his disguise, and he and his two accomplices (Geena Davis and Randy Quaid) head for the airport, the picture turns into a series of skits on the routine horrors of the city. Basically, it's a conventional caper comedy, but it's funny, because the gags are tossed off quickly and new characters keep coming at us. Murray co-produced (with Robert Greenhut) and co-directed (with Howard Franklin), and, although it's clearly a vehicle for him, he's actually less dominating than he was in the vehicles created for him by others. His attitude, wised-up and casual, holds the movie together, but he gives the other actors plenty of room, and many of them get brilliant bits of shtick to sink their teeth into. Bob Elliott (the surviving member of the great comedy team Bob and Ray) plays an elderly bank guard, a mild man who thinks he sounds fierce; his time onscreen can't add up to more than ten minutes, but every moment is pure joy. Tony Shalhoub, Philip Bosco, and Jack Gilpin all have wonderful moments, and there's a sublimely silly cameo by Stanley Tucci as a lisping, cringing gunsel. The picture has a core of sense: it knows what it is, which is nothing much, and what it does best, which is observing strange behavior in familiar settings. Also with Jason Robards and Kurtwood Smith. The screenplay, by Franklin, is based on a novel by Jay Cronley.—T.R. (7/30/90) (Cinema 3rd Avenue. . . . ¶ West Side Cinemas; through Aug. 16, evenings only. . . . ¶ Chelsea Cinemas; through Aug. 16.)

The Red Badge of Courage (1951)—Despite the mutilation (recorded in Lillian Ross's "Picture"), some seventy minutes remain of John Huston's film version of Stephen Crane's Civil War classic, and much of it is breathtaking. Audie Murphy plays the hero and Bill Mauldin is his sidekick; with Royal Dano, John Dierkes, Andy Devine, Douglas Dick, and Arthur Hunnicutt. Cinematography by Harold Rosson; music by Bronislau Kaper; the script is by Huston.—P.K. (Cinema Village; Aug. 17-18.)

The Stranger (1946)—The only conventionally made narrative film that Orson Welles ever directed. He undertook it, apparently, in order to prove that he could stay on a schedule and make the same sort of movies that other directors did; he said that there was nothing of himself in it, and that it was his "worst" picture. What he meant was, probably, that it's impersonal—that it has little of the specific Wellesian moviemaking excitement. It's a smooth, proficient, somewhat languorous thriller, handsomely shot (by Russell Metty), with some showy long takes. It's quite watchable, but the script (by Anthony Veiller and, though uncredited, John Huston, from a story by Victor Trivas and Decla Dunning) is clever in a shallow way: the people need more dimensions. Edward G. Robinson plays an F.B.I. war-crimes investigator on the trail of a Nazi arch-criminal (Welles) who has taken a false identity and is living in a small town in Connecticut, teaching in a prep school; his wife (Loretta Young) knows nothing of his past. The small-town details are entertaining, especially the scenes involving Billy House as the canny, fat drugstore proprietor, and Welles introduces some baroque touches and a garish finale, in which he's impaled on a sword at the top of a clock tower. His performance is so flagrantly, boyishly unconvincing—the Nazi seems preoccupied by his evil superman thoughts—that it's rather amusing.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Aug. 16.)

Take Me Out to the Ball Game (1949)—This big M-G-M musical, set in the early part of the century, began with a not too inspired script idea from Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, and after it went through a series of cast changes and then got assigned to Busby Berkeley to direct, it was a full-scale mess. Kelly and Frank Sinatra are vaudevillians who are also baseball players; Esther Williams, the manager of the baseball team, is in love with Kelly, but Sinatra is in love with her. And there are gangsters trying to get the boys to double-cross her and lose a game. This asinine story just about smothers the good-natured hoofing. Comden and Green and Roger Edens did the songs, but the musical numbers have that flag-waving Irish-American cheeriness that also blighted many Fox musicals made in the same period. With Betty Garrett and Jules Munshin, who work well with Kelly and Sinatra. The finale here isn't by Berkeley; it was co-directed by Kelly and Donen, and served to convince the studio to let them co-direct "On the Town" the following year. Script by Harry Tugend and George Wells; with Edward Arnold and Tom Dugan.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; Aug. 21-22.)

Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!—Pedro Almodóvar's new movie gets off to a fast start, like a windup toy, but it runs out of momentum early, and Almodóvar can't figure out how to start it up again. The story, about a released mental patient (Antonio Banderas) who follows a sexy actress (Victoria Abril) and then takes her prisoner, seems to tie the director's wild imagination down, and his efforts to keep his (and the audience's) blood circulating betray some desperation. Neither the kidnapper's romantic obsession nor his captive's eventual love for him is especially convincing. And we don't fully enjoy the perverse humor of the situation, either: we've seen the victim subdued by a hard slap, and that image is too strong to forget. The limpness of "Tie Me Up!" suggests that Almodóvar is either a confused director or a tired one—probably a bit of both. It's as if he had made the movie solely to satisfy the public's demand for a new Almodóvar film. Also with Francisco Rabal, Loles Leon, and Lola Cardona. Screenplay by Almodóvar. In Spanish.—T.R. (5/7/90) (Quad Cinema, and Lincoln Plaza.)

Total Recall—This fifty-million-dollar science-fiction thriller is full of relentless action and spectacular effects, and it's no fun at all. It's as heavy-spirited as its star, Arnold Schwarzenegger: imposing and implacable, like the killer robot Arnold played (or embodied) in "The Terminator." The script, by Ronald Shusett, Dan O'Bannon, and Gary Goldman, is based on a story by Philip K. Dick; the plot keeps twisting and turning, but we stop following it before the picture is half over. It's just a frame for meaty action sequences—a skeleton nestled deep inside ballooning muscles. The director, Paul Verhoeven ("RoboCop"), composes striking images, but they're oppressive and completely impersonal: every weird angle, every close-up of a face contorted with pain, every splash of bright-red blood is an effect borrowed from horror comics. The picture itself is a terminator: when it's over, you feel as if the life had been pounded out of you, and you never want to go to the movies again. Also with Sharon Stone, Ronny Cox, and Rachel Ticotin. Cinematography by Jost Vacano.—T.R. (6/18/90) (Eastside Cinema, and Criterion Center.)

"Monsieur Hire's Engagement," Georges Simenon's novel about sexual duplicity and scapegoating, inspired both the recent lovesick reverie "Monsieur Hire," directed by Patrice Leconte, and Julien Duvivier's classic 1946 suspense film, "Panique" (playing Aug. 19 at the Thalia SoHo). It's hard to imagine two more dissimilar movies extracted from the same material: a murder committed in a close-knit, petit-bourgeois neighborhood. In both films, Monsieur Hire becomes a suspect because he's a misanthrope and an oddball. At the same time, he falls in love with a new gal in town—who's actually the mistress of the real killer. But Leconte's version is just another art movie about voyeurism leading to romance: a notion that makes more sense to film directors than to anyone else.

"Panique" is something altogether more refreshing—a lean, tingling thriller. Duvivier turns Simenon's story into an exciting succession of emotional crises and kinetic set pieces. The characterizations are as strong as they are simple: Michel Simon, who plays Hire, is robust and proud, while Viviane Romance, who plays the object of his desire, makes a hard-edged jailbird. And whether the action takes place in a seedy hotel room or a pack of bumper cars, Duvivier gears it to express the horror of his central idea: that conformists can be swayed by everything from rumors to carnival rides. In his climactic sequence, the townspeople move from witnessing an accidental death to attending a travelling amusement show filled with freaks and whirligigs. It's a big-bang ending—a vision of modern man hopping mindlessly from one stimulant to another.

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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

As we write, at noon on Friday, August 10th, the United States is preparing for a war in the Middle East against Iraq, through a series of events that have taken place in just over a week. After almost a month of tension between Iraq and Kuwait—a dispute that was barely reported in the American press—the two countries opened diplomatic talks, but broke them off the next day, Wednesday, August 1st, when the Iraqis, it appears, demanded concessions of territory and ten billion dollars without further discussion. The next morning, Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait, occupied it, forced out the ruling family—the House of Sabah—and installed their own government, and the *next* morning Americans found on their front pages a crisis that was a complete surprise to them.

On August 3rd, as Congress was adjourning for a month-long holiday, the President, at Camp David, was considering military options, and, according to press reports, it was decided on Saturday, the fourth, to send troops—a contingent that may come to fifty thousand—and two Air Force squadrons and almost fifty ships, including the carriers Independence and Eisenhower, to defend Saudi Arabia. The orders were issued on Monday, the airlift of troops began early on Tuesday morning, and on Wednesday, the eighth, after briefing members of Congress, the President addressed the nation on television. He said:

> No one commits America's armed forces to a dangerous mission lightly, but after perhaps unparalleled international consultation, and exhausting every alternative, it became necessary to take this action. . . . Our country now imports nearly half the oil it consumes and could face a major threat to its economic independence. . . . I want to be clear about what we are doing and why. America does not seek conflict, nor do we seek to chart the destiny of other nations. But America will stand by her friends. The mission of our troops is wholly defensive. Hopefully, they will not be needed long. They will not initiate hostilities, but they will defend themselves, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and other friends in the Persian Gulf.

After the weekend meetings at Camp David that led to the President's decision, the Washington *Post* quoted a White House official as saying, "All of us knew this was not Panama, this was not Grenada, this was a deal with no known end, no predictability and everything a presidency has—I mean peace and prosperity—at stake." Peace and prosperity, however, cannot be said to belong to the President. They belong to the American people. It was their peace that was at stake, and it was they who were left in the dark. Any Americans who, like us, saw the newspaper headlines on Wednesday morning (the New York *Post:* "WE'RE GOIN' IN!") and felt the ground rushing under their feet, could only wonder about the pros and cons of sending fifty thousand American soldiers to the desert. In just one week, the country had taken a long step toward a huge expenditure of blood and treasure to confront an enemy most Americans did not know they had.

In the President's news conference on Wednesday, these exchanges took place:

> Q: Could you share with us the precise military objective of this mission? Will the American troops remain there only until Saddam Hussein removes his troops from the Saudi border?
>
> A: I can't answer that because we have to—we have a major objective with those troops, which is the defense of . . . Saudi Arabia. So I think it's beyond the—I think it's beyond just the question of tanks along the border.
>
> Q: Are you prepared for a long ground war in the Persian Gulf?
>
> A: I'm not preparing for a long ground war in the Persian Gulf. There's not a war going on there right now.

As the U.S.S. Eisenhower steamed east, you could recall the old General's ringing line "I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its *stupidity*." But you did not find much debate on the issue of war taking place in the press. Instead, there was a steady, rising drumbeat of warrior writing, the famous heroism of newspaper columnists.

Suddenly, in the tabloids, Iraq's President Saddam Hussein became the "Butcher of Baghdad" and a "megalomaniac," and Munich was repeatedly cited. "Saddam Hussein is not Hitler, but the dynamism of his regime is Hitlerian. That suggests he will not be stopped other than by superior force," George Will wrote in the Washington *Post.* The *Post's* chief foreign correspondent, Jim Hoagland, wrote, "Saddam Hussein, who began his career in the secretive and violent world of Iraqi politics as a teenage gunman, has changed the course of Arab and global politics with his invasion of Kuwait." And in a later column he said, "Saddam respects only force and will respond to nothing else." The *Wall Street Journal* suggested a stronger and permanent American military presence: it saw the President's actions as "a systematic preparation for dispatching the Iraqi aggressor and setting up permanent protections for the world's oil sources around the Persian Gulf," and went on to explain, "The allied forces will be in position to take steps to ensure that there are no further crises of this type in the Persian Gulf. That will entail a permanent force of some power in the region." In the *Times*, on Thursday, A. M. Rosenthal rose to a high pitch, predicting that Hussein would lead "the final Holy War as the one, true Muslim conqueror, crying destruction to the Jews and death to all Arabs who question his vision, course and glory," and the next day William Safire offered an imaginary monologue in Hussein's voice: "Today, Kuwait is mine; tomorrow, the Arab world."

The seemingly lone voice of American dissent was a column by the conservatives Rowland Evans and Robert Novak on Wednesday, which began, "Overkill against Saddam Hussein as a Hitlerite madman thirsting for world conquest endows the Iraqi strongman with powers he does not possess." They quoted Senator Arlen Specter, a Republican member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, as saying that Hussein had been badly mishandled by the United States, and explaining, "He is a rational man. He's a dangerous man, but he's someone that we have to deal with. After this is all over, we have to have a much better plan for dialogue and for trying to influence the man."

All week, as the big black headlines marched toward war, those few words from Senator Specter were the only vestige of a debate on American policy that we could find. On the subway, at the deli counter, in the line outside the movies, you could hear murmurs of doubt, dismay at the thought of American troops fighting a desert war, certain misgivings, but you did not find many misgivings in the press—rather, an unbecoming enthusiasm, a throwback to the yellow journalism ("Butcher of Baghdad") that led to the Spanish-American War in 1898. On Monday night, we tuned in ABC's "Nightline," a show on which one expects to hear debate, and what we found was two former Secretaries of Defense, Caspar Weinberger and Donald Rumsfeld, and one former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral William Crowe, discussing American military options, the Admiral standing in front of a map of the Middle East as if delivering a briefing. In a few days, the country had gone from peace to the verge of war without public discussion, and now, suddenly, Mr. Weinberger was warning against dissent, saying, "The United States has to be fully and completely resolved that they—that *we* —are to take this kind of action and willing to stay with it for some time." Congress had adjourned, hardly a soul in Washington had uttered so much as a sigh, but he said, ominously, "We can't fight a war in the Mideast and at the same time fight a war with our Congress. . . . We have to be united as a nation that we need to do this, we have to do it, and be resolved to pursue it to the end, even though there may be some losses."

"I agree with the Secretary in the strongest terms on that," Admiral Crowe said.

Mr. Rumsfeld agreed, too, and so, evidently, did Ted Koppel. "It is a notion Americans frequently have that all it's going to take is, you know, a few dozen sorties and then . . . it's all over and we can go home again," Koppel said, but he didn't press his guests to elaborate on that heroic phrase "pursue it to the end," or on what "some losses" might mean. The following evening, Mr. Koppel's broadcast originated live from C.I.A. headquarters in Langley, Virginia.

The American-Iraqi War, if there is to be such a thing, is not about freedom, or, really, about deterring aggression. This war is a war for oil. American soldiers are in Saudi Arabia because we are a society dependent on Arab oil. The still, small voice suggests that we stop and think. One of the inherent beauties of a democracy is the slowness to make war—the people are reluctant to suffer, to see their sons die, and their reluctance holds a government back—but last week the wheels raced forward, and, instead of questioning, the columnists cheered.

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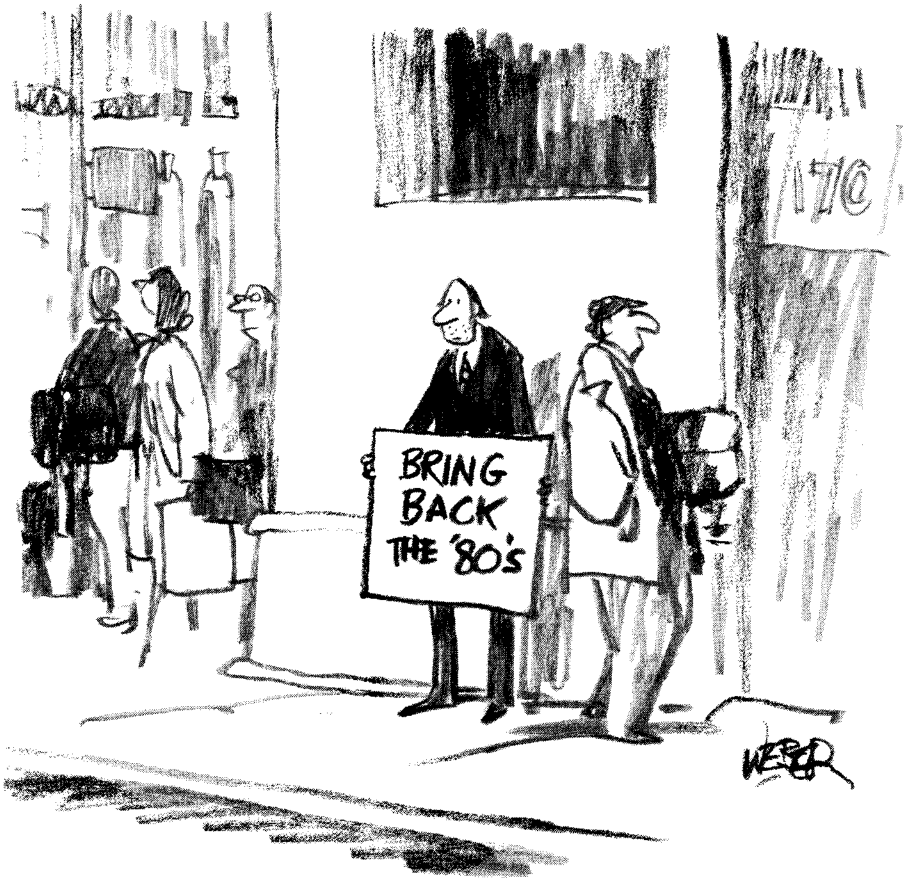
A FRIEND writes:

The longest game I've ever seen was the Braves vs. the Dodgers, in Los Angeles, July 27th, which went five hours and three minutes, a good chunk of time. I kept score faithfully, all twelve innings, but even a game as close and as interesting as that one—two home runs, two double plays, a player ejected, four two-out bases-loaded strikeouts, the Dodgers leaving twenty-five men stranded but finally winning, 5–4, on a squib single to right center with men on first and third and the Braves outfield pulled in tight—can't absorb your entire attention all that time, especially when you're sitting almost four hundred feet from home plate, high in the third deck, beyond foul-ball range. The chance that a batter will foul off the next pitch into the center of your forehead so hard you forget where your car is parked is what keeps you focussed on the play, but out in the North Dakota of the stadium, where I was, you are free to contemplate the totality. And you can *see* your car from there.

A perfect L.A. night: clear mountains, starry skies, cool temps—not what you expect to find in L.A. in July—and the section full of quiet fans, about half of them with handsome Hispanic features, dark eyes, black hair, including two small boys and a small girl next to me, who started to amuse themselves in the middle innings by taking turns making elephant cries. I have done this myself on occasion: a trumpeting sound made by blowing through tight lips, no easy trick. The older boy, who was about ten, had a good embouchure and got the right tone, shrill and meaty, but when their dad tried, the children sank down in embarrassment, they wilted, they rolled their eyes. (*Oh, Dad! Please!*) My father used to embarrass me when I was small by talking child talk in a squeaky little voice to my cousins and pretending to pout and cry. Compared with a four-year-old father, an elephant dad is pretty dignified, but I was glad when he stopped. To watch the embarrassment of children is exquisitely painful.

The game started at seven-thirty-five, and by the third inning, which arrived about two hours later, our attention hit a trough. (I speak here for all forty thousand.) It was Ball Day, and about a fourth of us, I'd say, were under ten years of age, and there was scattered whining up behind me, and some seat-kicking. But then a great left-handed peanut vender came through, and we woke up. His M.O. was to descend to the base of each aisle and stand and toss a bag of peanuts to everyone who raised a hand, then to ascend the stairs, collecting dollar bills as they were passed to the aisle. He had a good arm, able to throw fifteen rows up and twenty seats over, and he was almost always right on target. He returned in the bottom of the third, and his sales doubled. He stood and popped off fifteen bags, bang, bang, bang, to all corners of our section, and when he returned once more, much later in the fifth inning, we almost clapped. His face wore the impassive dignity of a star, and he was clearly bound for the Hall of Vending Fame.

It was good for all those Ball Day kids to see a true individualist and entrepreneur like the peanut man, and then, late in the seventh inning, at about ten-thirty, they got a taste of collective mass protest, too. When I was finishing my fourth bag of peanuts, I became aware of a faint high-pitched drone, like cicadas or tree toads, and as it got louder I noticed the children in my row perking up and, one by one, reaching under their seats for their baseballs. Hours before, as they came through the gate, everyone under the age of fourteen had got a free baseball in a plastic globe, in a box, and somewhere in Dodger Stadium a child had discovered the sound you could make by twisting the two halves of a plastic globe. A sharp, brilliant sound. This inspiration spread through the cheap seats, through armies of kids sitting far from the game, and the faint hum got louder, and then it was picked up by every child in the ballpark. It sounded like the soundtrack for a movie in which families are trapped in a forest filled with deadly mutant organisms from outer space. It was loud. You said to yourself, "This can't get any louder than this," and then it did. The Braves pitcher stepped off the rubber; the home-plate ump looked up at the stands. The stadium was like a vast day-care center in which the children have gone over the edge. You could hear fatherly voices say, "All right, that's enough," but it got worse. "Stop that," said the elephant dad. "Stop that right now. I mean it." If the Dodgers' Kirk Gibson had not sent a two-out double screaming down the right-field line a few minutes later and brought us back to the game, I think that nobody at Dodger Stadium would ever have had another child. But when Gibson was batted in and the Dodgers sprang into the lead, the space virus died. The park settled down, and the game dozed off for its final two hours.



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Yaohan

YAOHAN PLAZA is the largest Japanese shopping center in Edgewater, New Jersey, and, probably, on the entire East Coast. It's right on the river, along a stretch of Route 505 that includes auto-repair shops, a kidney-stone-treatment facility, a coffee factory, and something called Custom Parrot Network. The Plaza, which can be reached by car or bus, or by shuttle bus from the Port Authority—actually, by shuttle bus from *very near* the Port Authority, on Forty-second Street—consists of a parking lot and two low, white buildings trimmed in green and red.

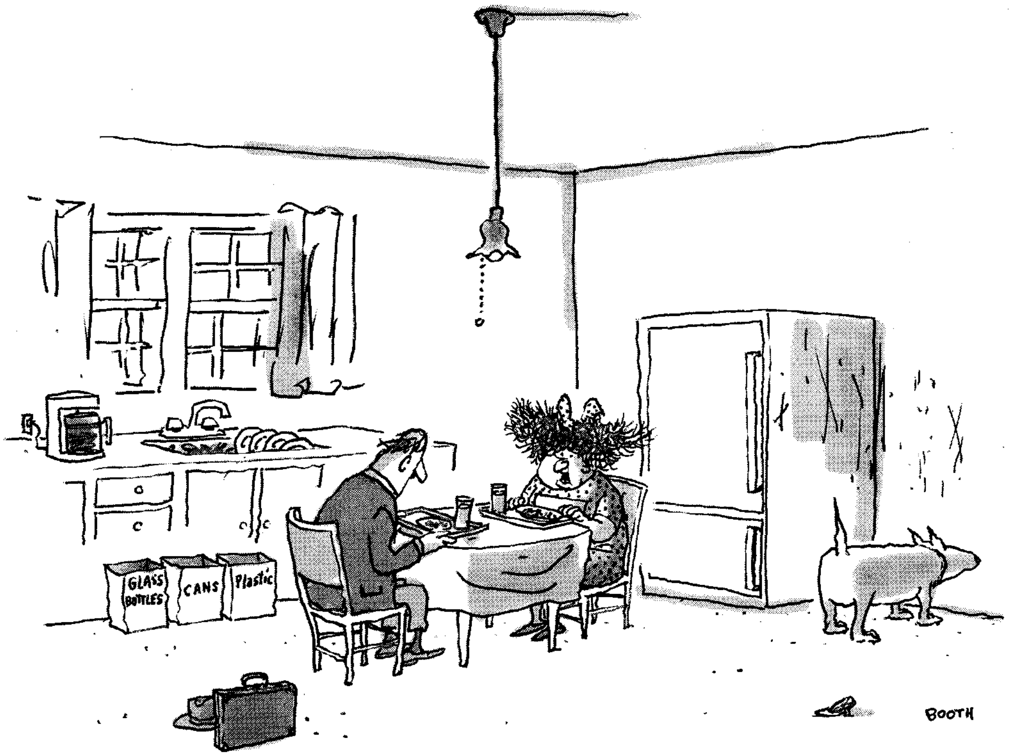
The larger building houses the Yaohan supermarket, and also administrative offices, a fast-food mall (which looks out across the river to Riverside Church), and an information counter piled with brochures for institutions like the Japanese Children's Society of Englewood Cliffs, the Mizuho Japanese School of Palisades Park, and Japan Cable Radio. At first glance, the market in not unlike any other modern supermarket and food arcade, with air-conditioning, linoleum floors, aisles arranged in a grid, piped-in music (low-volume pop), and shopping carts. Then you notice decorative touches of bamboo, and an unusual number of well-dressed young Japanese mothers pushing well-dressed young Japanese children around in carts filled with imported foods. The customers are quiet and polite. If you've thoughtlessly brought your cart to a halt in the middle of an aisle, so you can contemplate some tree mushrooms, the people you've incommoded don't shove or protest but just wait patiently until you move on.

And once you've moved on, what do you find? Many typical American supermarket products, most of them concentrated in the southeast corner of the market, but also ohba, mitsuba, nira, kaiware, white radishes the size of bowling pins, enoki mushrooms, eight kinds of plum wine, two-foot-long gobos, seasoned flakes of bonito and mackerel, frozen squid balls, Japanese Bean Buns, five shelves of noodles, dumpling skins, a few more shelves of noodles, seeds, bread crumbs, Vermont Curry, O'Free Yoghrumet soft drink, tempura-batter mix, powdered ice cream, Pack'n Cho cookies, bags and bags of rice, Nice Economy mangetsu chips, packets of Super Lemon Tablets ("Oh! Powerful Candy"), and yards of precut fish for sushi and sashimi.

Amid all this, a white-haired non-Asian woman is slowly pushing her cart through the aisles. She has the distracted look of a shopper who has come expecting English muffins and found packaged dried kelp. Her cart remains empty. She is apparently Yaohan's target customer. "The basic philosophy, ever since we opened, has been to sell the Japanese food culture to the Americans," Mori Yamada, Yaohan's busy administrative manager, tells us. There are already six Yaohan shopping centers in California, he says, and one is planned for Chicago. The Edgewater Yaohan opened in September, 1988, and employs two hundred and twenty people. For how many customers? "We do have a figure," Mr. Yamada says. "Close to thirty thousand per week. The customers are from forty to fifty per cent Japanese, from twenty to thirty per cent other Asians, and the balance local people. But, of course, the Japanese are the big spenders."

Not everything the customers are buying is edible. A few steps across the pavement from the market is the other low, white building trimmed in green and red—the Yaohan department-store complex. Inside, signs hang from the ceiling: "Kitchen Appliance," "Hair Dryer," "Washing Machine," "Television," "Best Life," "System Component." Although the items designated are apparently in good supply, all the signs are in the singular. It's impossible not to give "Television" a miss and make a beeline for "Best Life." The phrase turns out to be a too literal translation of a popular Japanese expression suggesting deep satisfaction and comfort, and, sure enough, under the "Best Life" shingle is a collection of undulating Leatherette easy chairs with vibrating seats, backs, and footrests. Demonstration models administer a vigorous massage, producing the inner calm that shoppers require to approach the Yaohan toy section; that is, to approach Astro Boy, Tokyo Dome Big Egg Baseball, Big Size Ultraman, the ZOIDS-DEATH SAURER (dinosaur type), the ZOIDS-WARDICK (fish type), and Mr. Chops, The Nagging Dragon, to say nothing of the whole Windowpop series of superheroes. These last are plastic figurines captured in the act of emerging through what appears to be shattering glass. ("BATMAN BREAKING THRU THE WINDOW—ACTION POSE," one box says; "SUPERMAN JUMPS OUT THE WINDOW!" another promises.) There is also the Godzilla toilet-paper dispenser ("Fun & Functional"), which growls at you whenever you tug on the roll. A customer—male, Japanese—hesitates in front of Godzilla, but apparently not because of the price, which is about forty dollars. "How does it stop?" he asks.

Back in the market, the white-haired non-Asian woman is passing under the "Pot & Pan" sign. Her cart remains empty, but she is wearing a smile and moving down this aisle with a determination that suggests she is finally ready to face, if necessary, an entire shelf of mangetsu chips.



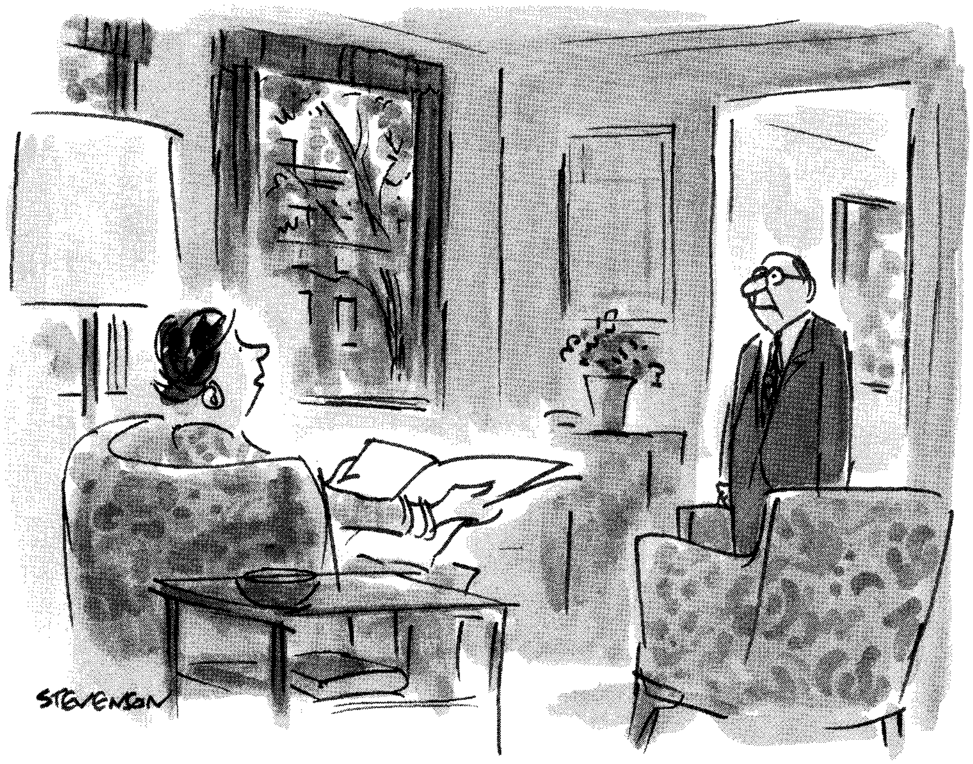
"If there is plastic on your tray, recycle it."

Expressive

THIS year, the host of Revlon's Second Annual Unforgettable Women Contest was that sort of sensuous-looking model with the mole just above her upper lip—you know, the one who does all those cosmetic ads and goes out with that actor, the sulky, quasi-intellectual-looking one whose name is right on the tip of our tongue. Sulky Whatever-His-Name-Is wasn't at the contest final the other night, but nearly everyone in the fashion press was, and the buzz at the hors-d'oeuvres tables was, first, about whether the diamond necklace that Sensuous What's-Her-Face was wearing was real, and, second, about which of the nine finalists would win the contest, becoming the Unforgettable Woman of 1990. The nine finalists were chosen from the thousands who had written an essay to Revlon finishing the statement "I am an Unforgettable Woman because . . ." The winner would get not only the year's Unforgettable Woman title but twenty-five thousand dollars, and would appear in one of the Unforgettable Women ads, which have so far featured the world's most famous models, all the ones you recognize instantly, and also some of the world's best-looking celebrity couples—like the guy with the stubble who was the detective on that tropical police-buddy show and the woman he has married a couple of times, the daughter of one of those blond actresses from the fifties you can never keep straight.

Whatever. The Temple of Dendur, at the Met, where the final was held, was decorated with giant blowups of some of the Unforgettable ads. The press kits were black and jungle red and an inch and a half thick, and contained glossy photographs of Sensuous, the nine finalists, and the evening's honored guest—that funny actress with the sharp nose, the one who's always denying that she's really beautiful, and now has her own TV show and is married to one of those French directors. You'd remember her the minute you saw her. The room was larded with Unforgettable faces—that up-and-coming jeans model with the tousled hair and the huge lips whose picture is currently on the back of every bus, and the muscular one who looks like a cat, and a few who are probably just doing catalogue work right now, but you can tell they're models because they have the essential one-to-three torso-to-leg ratio.

Eventually, Sensuous called the Temple to order, made a few charming opening remarks, and introduced the contest judges—the names escape us at the moment, but they were memorably identified as Noted Author, Well-Known Fashion Designer, Distinguished Psychologist, Celebrity Host, and, as Sensuous put it, with a dazzling smile, "My Own Personal Agent." Right then, some irrepressible member of the audience called out, "Hey, are your diamonds real, or *what*?" Sensuous, demonstrating terrific poise—she's planning a career in acting—said that she wasn't allowed to tell, but that she owed a big thank-you to that guy who has done all those multimillion-dollar leveraged buyouts. No, not Henry Kravis, the other one, the one who is now chairman of Revlon. Everyone applauded.



"Is that you, or am I experiencing Artificial Reality?"

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Now Sensuous introduced the finalists, who were standing on the little stage looking nervous. The introductions were excerpts from their essays and a brief biography, which Sensuous read while each young woman being described strolled across the stage and struck a pose at her appointed place.

Finalist No. 1: Batwing black gown. Unforgettable, in her opinion, because she has overcome a great many obstacles to achieve her goals.

Finalist No. 2: Black robe dress, blond hair in a threatening-to-collapse chignon, swan neck, says she's unforgettable because she's happy on the inside. Mouthed "Hello, Mom" after striking her pose.

Finalist No. 3: Scoop-neck black cocktail dress. Unforgettable because of big heart and big dreams.

Finalist No. 4: Unforgettably enthusiastic.

Finalist No. 5: Unforgettably positive.

Finalist No. 6: Possessed, in an unforgettable way, of the natural beauty of her ancestors.

Finalist No. 7: Unforgettably expressive.

Finalist No. 8: Unforgettable zest.

Finalist No. 9: Confident.

The finalists sat down. Then last year's Unforgettable Woman came to the mike and made a few damp remarks about how great it had been to be unforgettable for a year. She's delicate and dark-haired, kind of—whatchamacallit, petite. If you think you've seen the last of her, forget it—she just signed a contract with Zoli or Elite or one of those other agencies, and she'll be all over the place very soon. She was followed by Funny, who made a few very dry remarks about being beautiful and funny and unforgettable.

We figured Big Dreams or Zest would take the honors, but it was Expressive. She accepted the trophy in tears but with a lot of presence. She's got big, arched eyebrows and wide cheekbones—something like that. Maybe they weren't so arched, really, but they left an impression. Anyway, you'll know her when you see her.

ANOTHER PLACE

When years without number
like days of another summer
had turned into air there
once more was a street that had never
forgotten the eyes of its child

not so long by then of course or
so tall or dark anywhere
with the same store at the corner
sunk deeper into its odor
of bananas and ice cream

still hoarding the sound of roller
skates crossing the cupped board floor
but the sidewalk flagstones were
cemented and the streetcar
tracks buried under a late

surface and it was all cleaner
as they had said it would be and bare
like the unmoving water
of the windows or a picture
in white beneath the swept sky

of a morning from which the trees were
gone with their shadows and their
time that seemed when we moved there
years before to hold whatever
had existed in the moment

that echoed the notes of our
feet striking almost together
on the hollow wooden front stair
up to the porch and glass door
of the sepia house which once

we were gone would be whited over
we walked with my father
climbing toward his fortieth year
in the clothes of a minister
Presbyterian vacating

a church with a yellow brick spire
on a cliff above a river
with New York on the other shore
by then the Protestants were
moving out of that neighborhood

the building was in disrepair
and a year or two after
he left it the leaking structure
would be sold to the Catholics for
a song and then torn down

and its place would know it no more
remaining empty for
the rest of his life and longer
when he got to the top stair
of the new manse he turned around

to face the photographer
and stood up straight gazing over
the man's shoulder toward the other
side of the street and the square
bell tower the stuccoed walls

stone steps carved frame of the door
rose window that was a wonder
he said of its kind the summer
still floated in the light and before
long he would find someone

with the talent to capture
that sacred architecture
in black-and-white for the cover
of the bulletin week after
week the name of the church

in Gothic letters under
the noble mass in the picture
and below in slightly smaller
type the name of the pastor
page 1 *inside announcing*

every Sunday the order
of service giving the Scripture
verses hymn numbers Psalter
and text upon which the minister
himself would preach this morning

page 2 the schedules for choir
practice Christian Endeavor
deacons' elders' and prayer
meetings quiltings clam chowder
get-togethers Boy Scouts Girl Scouts

as he gazed he could hear
his own voice circling higher
out of the picture before
him leading them all together
amen amen that would be

the shadowed sanctum where
he would stew in the rancor
of trustees' meetings bicker
over appointments procedure
and money always money

and would watch within a year
his congregation shatter
into angry parties and there
as his own marriage turned sour
disappointed grudging absent

yet his own beyond his doubt or
understanding and the pair
of lovely children who were
also his although never
had he seemed to be able

really to touch them or
address them except in anger
grew up turned from him somewhere
on the far side of their mother
telling him nothing waiting

out his presence dropping their
voices when he would appear
since they had learned to remember
him only as the author
of everything forbidden

he would take to going over
in the evening after
an early supper whenever
nothing was scheduled for
that night and the church stood dark

and hollow to the side door
at the foot of the tower
topcoat flapping and a folder
of papers clutched in the other
hand as he turned the key and

slipped through reaching up for
his hat and pausing to hear
the lock click behind him before
he touched the pearl button once more
to wake to himself the high

green walls lit yellow the air
of a cavern without breath or
sound that had heard no one enter
looming up and the first stair
coughing under his foot

in the wooden night then the floor
of the Sunday-school room louder
because there was nobody there
to watch him to hover
above him and wait for him nothing

to be afraid of therefore
the psalmist said we shall fear
not but walk with greater
deliberation pause ponder
rows of chairs closed piano

line of one varnished rafter
to its end while whistling under
the breath over and over four
or five tuneless notes as far
as the closed carved oaken

door of his cold study where
his own blood rose in his ear
like a sea in the dark before
the light spilled down the sombre
panelled walls across green

filing cabinets moss underfoot
heavy desk all but bare
and behind it the black leather

back of the waiting chair
facing him in which without his

noting it he was aware
repeatedly of another
figure of himself younger
it seemed by maybe a year
or two wearing a shirt

of gleaming white and never a
coat over it however
cold the radiator
and the draft at the shoulder
from the black window but that

was the one without error
all along the one with each year
of school completed no favor
to beg nothing to make up for
to excuse or put differently

the one he liked to refer
to as himself and to speak for
when questioned the one he was sure
of the one with the answer
who did not look up and whose

eyes mouth indeed no feature
of whose face he had ever
seen directly but neither
did he glance toward them or
touch the cold chair even

for one moment to sit down there
only patted the desk another
time on his way to the far
door and the organ and choir
stalls the chancel the three

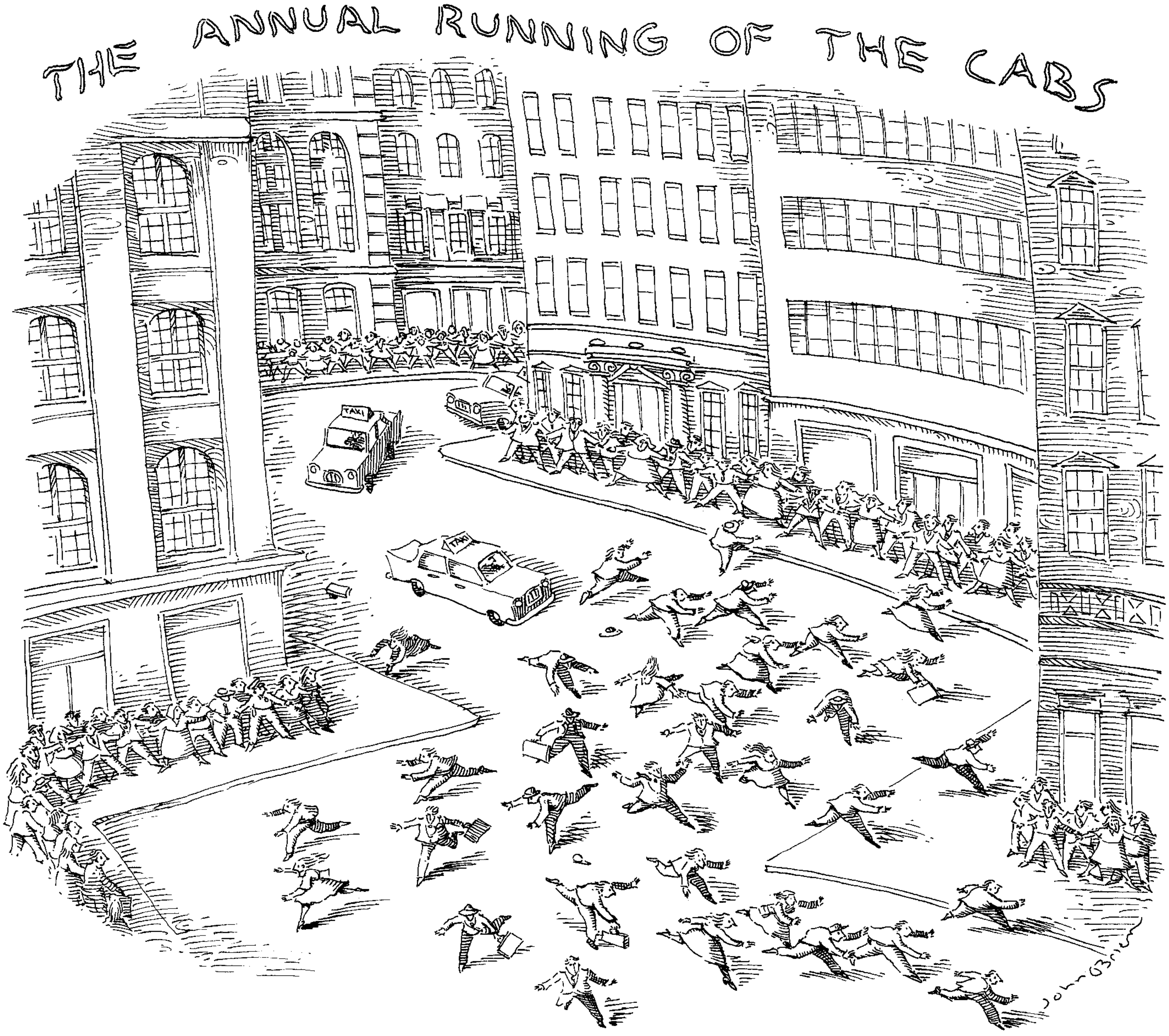
high seats out in the center
where he turned slowly to stare
past the line where the black water
of empty pews came ashore
and to peer up at the arches

that dove into the dark over
narrow bands of faint color
seeping through glass at that hour
he raised his arms facing the farther
wall by way of rehearsal

squeezed his eyes shut to mutter
some benediction or other
and in his Sunday manner
climbed with his handful of paper
into the pulpit to leaf

through his notes and deliver
a passage here and there
his voice returning over
and over to the same threadbare
wandering phrases unfinished

sentences trying with fervor
and sound to kindle from their
frayed ends a redeeming power


THE ANNUAL RUNNING OF THE CABS
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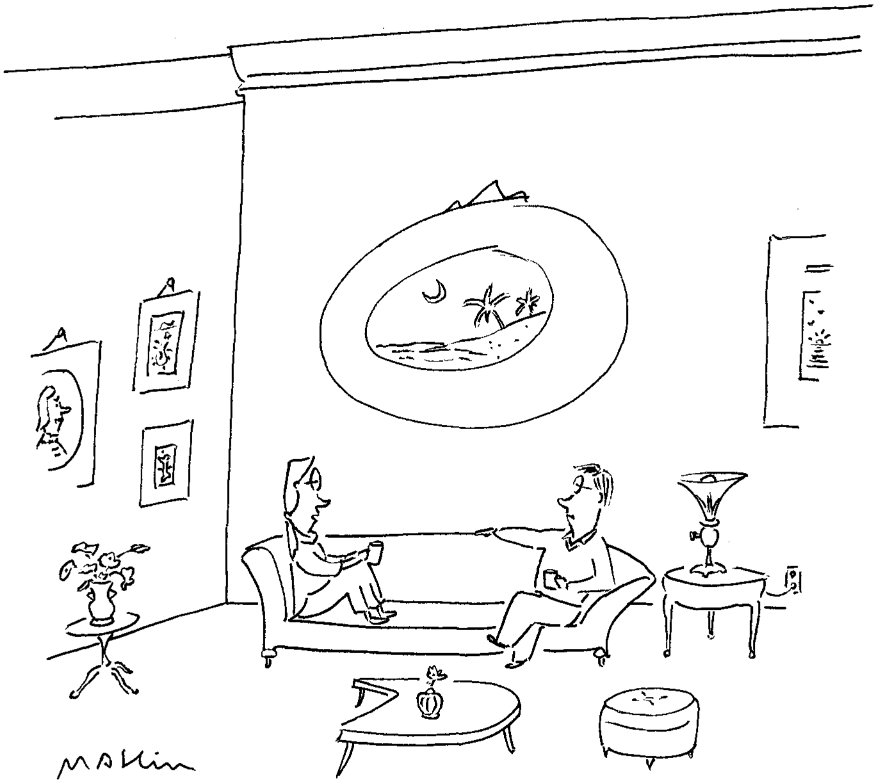
TAXI



"Correct me if I'm wrong, Carl, but you strike me as the kind of guy who cares—really cares—whether your tuna's packed in water or oil."

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whole and irrefutably clear
to the waiting darkness at

last he ran through the entire
sermon as though he could hear
himself from the shadows and after
he had come to the end he stood over
the pages while the echo

sank back from the tones of one more
final word that would sound for
a moment and then lie together
with the others of that year
in a box to be piled

on a shelf and maybe never
opened again before
his last instructions were
carried out and the white pyre
of all his preaching built high

in a garden incinerator
one bright day of another
autumn farther west near
where he had started from but for
the moment the pages lay

still in the unlit core
of the week while the same whisper
of the heedless dark rose closer
to his breath he gathered his paper
together turned out the lights

behind him left by the back door
to the side street and his car
and late haunts a running sore
in his marriage and rumor
soon followed after and took

not long at all to discover
which nicely spoken young helper
had been driving with the preacher
alone at what times and where
how much attention he seemed

to spend on her widowed mother
and sick brother at their
little house around the corner
until he went off to the war
as a chaplain and his

family moved to another
part of town then another
town and none of them ever
came back but the house was still there
somewhere under its dazzling

paint and so was the top stair
where he had turned toward the far
side of the street with the gray tower
the dark ring in the austere
façade and in that place

as when one hand alone for
a moment clinging to air
above the rising water
so quickly is drawn under
that it leaves those who have seen it

asking each other whether
what they have seen was ever
there and they cannot be certain or
as when a face familiar
it seems as the common day

around it with every feature
known and nothing either
lost or surprising may appear
again in its regular
stance and its quiet voice begin

to relay at its leisure
something that the listener
will need to remember
and suddenly the dreamer
is shaken awake so from the low

house with the piled porch furniture
where the old choir director
used to rock in his darkened parlor
and all the way to the corner
instead of the building and its age

there was nothing but the clear
sky of autumn with a barrier
of pine boards sawn raw from their
lives standing along the gutter
around nothing visible

until one came to look over
the edge with the sign Danger
Keep Out and see the latter
mountains the glister of char
on jutting wood the jagged

pieces of remembered color
that had been carried so far
in the dark at last raising their
bright tips out of a glacier
of cinders and fallen sections

of brickwork scorched wallpaper
shreds of its green-vine-and-flower
pattern still waving over
pools of shivering water
and broken tiles from the long red

aisle all heaped up together
naked to the public air
in the smell of wet plaster
and of fire a few days before
and of the leaves in autumn

—W. S. Merwin

THE LOST WORLD

ONE summer night not long after he turned sixteen, Nathan Shapiro drank four tall cans of Olde English 800 and very soon found himself sitting in the front seat of a huge, banana-colored Ford LTD, with his friends Buster, Felix E., and Tiger Montaine. They had all drunk malt liquor while bathing in Buster French's hot tub (the Frenches were from Los Angeles) and, as a result, were driving around boiled, steaming drunk, and in various stages of undress. Buster and Felix E. still had on their scant Speedo bathing suits, Tiger Montaine wore only a black mesh tank top and one sanitary sock, and Nathan, through some combination of glee and desperation, was naked from head to toe.

Two weeks before this, his mother, in a modest and homemade little ceremony, had married a man named Ed Knipper, a kindly, balding geologist from Idaho whom she had been dating for six months. And then just this evening, an hour before Nathan went over to Buster French's house, Dr. Shapiro had telephoned jubilantly from Boston to announce the first pregnancy of his second wife, Anne. Ricky, Nathan's brother, had been living in Boston for a year now, and he went on and on over the phone about the little bubble of life that had blossomed in the vial of Anne's home pregnancy test, which Ricky had taken to his room and placed between his soccer trophy and a photograph of his mother and father and Nathan standing in the wind at Kitty Hawk.

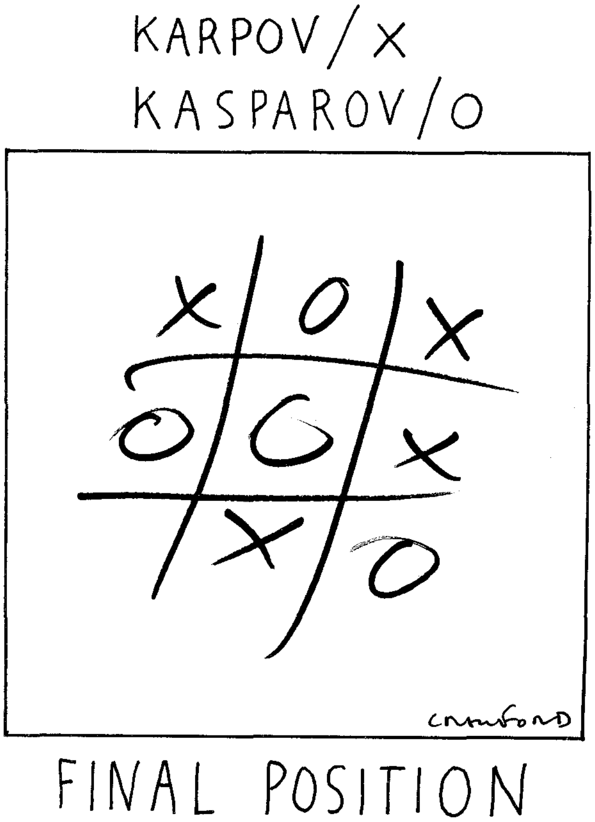
All of these developments, though he did his best to welcome them, had left Nathan somewhat more than normally confused. He liked his new stepfather, who had been to Antarctica and Peru and Novaya Zemlya and returned with all sorts of hair-raising tales and queer stones; in his own way he was as genuinely excited as Ricky by the prospect of a new baby; and he was old enough to regard these changes as the inevitable outward expansion, as of an empire or an ice cap, of what once had been his family. He was happy for his parents in their new lives, the way he had always been happy for them, all along, as step by step they had dismantled their marriage. And so he was looking for a reason, an excuse to feel so unmoored, at once so angry and nostalgic; and alcohol seemed to be doing the job. He had no idea where he and his friends were going, and it was not until they had been lurching aimlessly along the empty, fragrant streets of Huxley for what seemed like hours that he understood that they were headed—as Buster French put it—to the crib of Chaya Feldman.

Buster, driving Mrs. French's car, made this declaration just as the drink, the deep velour seats, and the sweet smell of lawns flowing in through the open windows had begun to lull Nathan to sleep, and at the mention of Chaya's name Nathan sat bolt upright. Buster then called Chaya a "skeezer," which meant, as far as Nathan was able to determine, that she was certain to permit them—all four of them—those dark liberties of which he was still very much ignorant: a notion that filled him only with wonder, and with solicitude for Chaya, whom he had known since he was six years old. She was a quiet girl, with a serious, brown face and tangled hair, and her parents had dressed her like a doll. He remembered her as someone who was always coming upon orphaned puppies and sparrow chicks with broken wings, in meadows and along roads where anyone else would have found nothing at all, and then trying imperfectly, with an eyedropper full of milk or sugar water, to nurse them back to health. Her chief social art—until recently, at least—had been that upon request she could draw you an extremely realistic picture of an eyeball, with a sparkle on the iris, and fathomless pupils, and the finest tracery of veins.

They had never really been friends, but from time to time Nathan still thought about one distant afternoon when he and Chaya had somehow ended up playing together, in the fields behind the Huxley Interfaith Plexus. In the tall grass and the weeds they had played a game of Chaya's own invention, called Planet of the Birds. Nathan had been an intergalactic castaway trying to survive in a windy, grassy world, and Chaya's hair had tossed like a crest of feathers as she sang to him in a variety of cries. Chaya even claimed that when she grew up she was going to write a book set on this imaginary planet, whose name, she said, was Jadis; in the dust she scratched a map of its oceans and aeries. As with all of those blissful Sunday afternoons he had ever passed with some child whom he never played with again—every childhood has a dozen or so—his memory of this vanished afternoon was luminous and clear. In the three years since his liberation from Hebrew school he had seen Chaya twice, from a distance, coming out of a movie with her parents and her sister, Mara. Now Nathan was suddenly afraid for her, and he was afraid, for the first time ever, of the raucous bodies of his friends.

"Hey, Buster," said Felix E. Scott, leaning forward so that for an instant his thigh lay smooth and cool against Nathan's, "what you going to do to Chaya Feldman?"

"Don't tell me you don't already know, Felix E.," said



Buster, heaving the LTD into a small cul-de-sac that Nathan recognized, from some long-ago car pool, as Chaya's street.

"Cut the engine," said Tiger Montaine, who excelled in stealthy behavior. He ran his battered little Fiat on siphoned gasoline, filched cigarettes from the supermarket, and had for several months, with Nathan's shocked connivance, been replacing Mrs. Shapiro-Knipper's codeine pills with Extra-Strength Tylenol, one at a time. "Don't be waking up that mean Israelite daddy." Chaya's father, Moshe, an oncologist, had been born and raised in Israel, and was, in fact, the most humorless and stern of the hundred and five fathers Nathan had known in his life. He had a dense black beard and crazy eyebrows, and it was widely half-believed that he kept an Uzi submachine gun, from his days in the Army of Israel, hidden under his bed.

Buster turned off the ignition, and the car began to glide silently toward Chaya's house. The sudden calm cast a pall over the party, and no one spoke; perhaps they were only being careful. Nathan pictured Chaya asleep, her legs tangled under a light summer blanket; a skeezer! Then, because the ignition had been cut, the steering wheel locked automatically, and before Buster could do anything they hopped up over the curb and came to a stop halfway across somebody's front lawn.

"We're there," said Buster, and everyone laughed. "Now, who's going to go knocking on that skeezer's window?"

"I'll go," said Nathan. "I know her."

All the other boys turned to regard him. Although Nathan felt fairly confident that his friends held him in a certain esteem—his naked presence among them was testimony to that—he had never distinguished himself for his daring and, in fact, generally had to be persuaded to perform even minor feats such as dancing with Twanda Woods, or wearing his sneakers without any laces—an affectation that drove his mother out of her mind. And all the boys knew, for Nathan had been unable, despite himself, to conceal it, that he had never made love to a girl. Emboldened by the malt liquor, he reached out and pushed Felix E. and Tiger so that they fell backward into each other.

"I went to Hebrew school with her," he explained.

Perhaps it was only their shock at his uncharacteristic display of fearlessness, but as Nathan stepped out of the car he noticed a strange look in the eyes of his friends. It was a kind of blank, blinking puzzlement, as though the game had gone awry. Nathan wondered if the whole thing was a lie, if Chaya was not a skeezer at all, and if the boys were all virgins, too, and none of them knew what fate awaited him as he began to make his way, naked, across the soft grass. He glanced toward the car, toward the three shadowy heads now drawn together in what looked like anxious parley, and almost turned back.

The next moment, however, he felt an entirely new kind of drunkenness; the air was warm against his skin, his lips, his forearms, and—incredibly—moonlight fell upon his penis. He wished that it were a mile to Chaya's house, and not a few short steps, so that he might walk this way a little longer, like a fairy on a moonlit heath. Just this summer—just this month—his body had begun to grow lean, and he strode across the grass with the jangling gait of a young man, delighting in the purpose of his legs. He came to the Feldmans' driveway and zigzagged quickly around to the left side of the house, where he was confronted with a gated wooden fence. He stopped and contemplated the latticed gate. His breath came quickly now, and there was sweat in his eyebrows; a drop spattered against his cheek. Just when he felt the water on his face he saw, through the spaces in the lattice, that a swimming pool, long and unusually narrow, lay beyond. It was not a pool for a pleasure swim; it was a lap pool, no wider than a pair of racing freestylers. Nathan remembered hearing that Dr. Feldman required himself and his family to swim a mile every day.

Pretending for the moment that he was tricksy Tiger Montaine, Nathan held his breath, eased up the steel latch, and slowly opened the gate without a sound. He walked to the railroad ties that formed the border of the near end of the lap pool and curled his toes over their edge. Thus perched, he stood a moment, looking at the reflected moon on the black water and trying to force the tumult in his stomach to abate. He was so nervous that he forgot why he was nervous, and simply hovered at the edge of Chaya's swimming pool, shaking. What was he doing here? Where were his clothes?

He crouched and then slipped into the cool water. He swam the length of the pool with a light and leisurely stroke. The exercise of his arms and heart in the cold water cleared his thoughts and left him with a pleasant chlorine sting in his eyes, and when he arrived at the far end of the lap pool he felt a greater trust in himself and in the general benevolence of a Tuesday night in July. He pulled himself from the pool and tiptoed around to the back of the Feldmans' house. There were some bedsheets, striped pillowcases, and a pair of bath towels hanging from a revolving clothesline in the back

yard, and he considered taking a towel and tying it around his waist. But he felt, obscurely, that there was some advantage in his nakedness, an almost magical advantage that Tiger Montaine, for example, would never have surrendered, and he went over to the windows of the daylight basement in which Chaya had always had her room and stood a moment, with his hands on his wet hips, looking into the dark windows, preparing to wake her. The pool water streamed down his chest to his thighs, raising goose bumps along his legs and arms as he drummed lightly on the glass, attempting a sort of suave, seductive rhythm that came out, inexorably, as shave-and-a-haircut, two-bits.

"Well, we're alfresco. Now what?"

A LIGHT snapped on inside. Someone sat up in the bed—in Chaya's bed—and this someone did not appear to be Chaya. She was too tall, and her hair was fuller and darker, and through the armhole of her sheer, short nightgown he saw the startling contour of a woman's heavy breast. He turned and began to hightail it out of the back yard, but the door opened almost immediately and he turned sheepishly back.

"Is, uh, Chaya here?" he said, in a tone that he hoped would make him sound too stupid to be doing something illicit.

"Nathan? Nathan Shapiro?"

"Chaya?"

"What are you doing here? Where are your clothes?"

The light spilling out around her reduced her to a silhouette and he could not tell if she looked angry or merely puzzled. Her voice was a cracked whisper and sounded rather plaintive in the dark, as though she was also afraid of getting into some kind of trouble.

"I swam in your pool," Nathan offered, uncertain if this would explain everything adequately.

"Well, you'd better get out of here. My dad is sleeping and he had a headache all day."

"O.K.," said Nathan. "Goodbye. You got so big, Chaya." He was staring.

"Puberty," she said. "Ever hear of it?" She stepped back into the light of her room and smiled a sort of frowny smile she had always had, and then Nathan felt that he recognized her.

"Chaya, I feel so weird," he said. At the sight of her familiar, serious face he was all at once on the verge of tears.

"Well. O.K., come inside. You have to be quiet."

"O.K."

Nathan followed Chaya into her room, which had a dropped ceiling and the damp-carpet odor of a basement. On one panelled wall there was a print of "The Starry Night" and an El Al poster with a picture of the Old City of Jerusalem, on another wall a painting that Chaya herself must have made—a picture of a palm tree full of bright parrots under a double sun—and Nathan remembered the day he had spent on the planet Jadis. Beside the painting was an old mounted deer's head with a split ear, wearing sunglasses and a purple beret. On the table beside her bed was a squat jug lamp with a green shade, a package of Kool cigarettes, and a book by Erica Jong that Nathan had twice been admonished against reading by his grandfather. The circle of light from the lamp seemed to fall almost entirely on the bed, and Nathan averted his eyes, so intimate was the sight of the exposed white sheets and the deep declivity in the pillow. The imprint of her sleeping head, the whole idea of Chaya asleep, struck him as terribly poignant, and he could not look. He heard the creak of the bedsprings and the rustle of sheets as she climbed back into bed.

"I mean, you're not ugly or anything, Nathan," said Chaya, "but put something on, O.K.?"

"I'm naked!" said Nathan. He looked down at himself, and knew that he was naked. And he saw, as through Chaya's eyes, that his penis, in assuming some of its manly proportions and features, had begun to take on a concomitant forlorn and humorous aspect, sort of like the Jeep in Popeye cartoons; and he made an apron of his hands and forearms. This did nothing to conceal, however, the whiteness of his thighs, or the soft, sad divot of hair around his left—but not yet his right—nipple.

"There's a towel on the chair."

"I'd better go," said Nathan. He turned and began to walk out the door, attempting now to cover his probably ridiculous-looking rear end.

"It's O.K. Go ahead, put it on you," said Chaya.

"They brought me," he said, turning again and crab-walking over to the chair beside Chaya's desk. "The guys. Tiger and Buster and Felix E." Hurriedly he wrapped the towel around his waist and tucked in one end, in the fashion that his grandmother had always referred to, for some reason, as Turkish. It was a scratchy white towel that had been stolen, to judge from the illegible Hebrew lettering that was woven like a pattern into one side, from some hotel in Israel. The lopsided situation of his chest hair remained a keen embarrassment, and the towel was so skimpy that the knot at his hip just barely held.

"Are they out there?"

"Yeah. They sent me in. They said—"

"Your hair is all wet." She folded her hands over her stomach, on the pleat of the bedclothes, and stared at him. She seemed, all in all, only mildly surprised to see Nathan, as though he were visiting her in a dream. Her face had grown wider, her cheekbones more pronounced, since the last time he had seen her, and Nathan thought that with her tawny skin and her thick eyebrows and that big, wild hair she looked beautiful and a little scary. He sat down and hugged himself. His teeth were chattering.

"O.K., now I better go." He stood up again.

"Wait," said Chaya. She patted the sheets and indicated that he sit beside her. He came to sit gingerly at her feet, keeping hold with one hand of the tenuous Turkish knot.

"Nathan Shapiro," she said, shaking her head.

"Chaya Feldman."

"Mrs. Falutnick's class."

"Kvit chewink your gum in fronta da *r*-radio," said Nathan, repeating a favorite inscrutable admonishment of Mrs. Falutnick's in an accent he had not mimicked for six or seven years. Chaya laughed, but Nathan only snorted once through his nose. It had been so long since the days of Mrs. Falutnick's class! He saw himself sitting in a flecked plastic chair at the back of the droning classroom in the Huxley Interfaith Plexus, defacing with mustaches and monkey's fur the grave photographs of Emma Lazarus and Abraham Cahan in his copy of "Adventures in American Jewry," and furtively folding all ten inches of a stick of grape Big Buddy into his mouth when Mrs. Falutnick turned her enormous back on the class. He was unaccountably saddened, and he sighed, startling Chaya out of her dream.

"I heard your parents got a divorce," she said. She looked down, and her long hair splashed her folded hands.

"Yeah," said Nathan, hugging himself again. The shiver that this word produced in him never lasted more than a second or two.

"Why did they?"

"I don't know," Nathan said.

"You don't?"

He thought about it for a few seconds, then shook his head. "I mean, they told me, but I forget what they said."

"It's complicated," Chaya offered, helpfully. "People change."

"I think that was part of it," Nathan said, but he didn't believe that there was really any explanation at all.

"Does your dad still live around here?"

"He moved to Boston."

"That's cool," said Chaya. She lifted the curtain of hair from her face and smiled another crooked smile. "I wish my dad would move to Boston."

Nathan said automatically, "No, you don't." He had hitherto managed to forget about the fearsome doctor and he glanced over his shoulder. In the far corner of the room he noticed three large plastic suitcases and a guitar case, neatly lined up as for an imminent departure.

"Where are you going?" he said, gesturing toward the luggage.

"Jerusalem," said Chaya. "Tomorrow. Today, I guess. Later this morning."

"With your family? Or all alone?"

"All alone."

"Are you ever coming back?"

"Of course I am, you," she said. "My father thinks I've gotten— He just wants me to learn to be an Israeli."

"Oh," said Nathan. He was not certain what this entailed, but he suddenly pictured Chaya operating a crane on the bristling lip of a giant construction site in the desert, lowering a turbine generator or a sheaf of I-beams down into the void, the dust of the Negev blowing around her like a long scarf.

"Did they tell you I put out?" said Chaya. "Those guys?"

"Kind of," said Nathan, taken aback, before it occurred to him that this was admitting he had come here for sex, when in fact he had come— Why had he come? "It was more like a dare, I guess," he said. "They sort of more or less dared me to come."

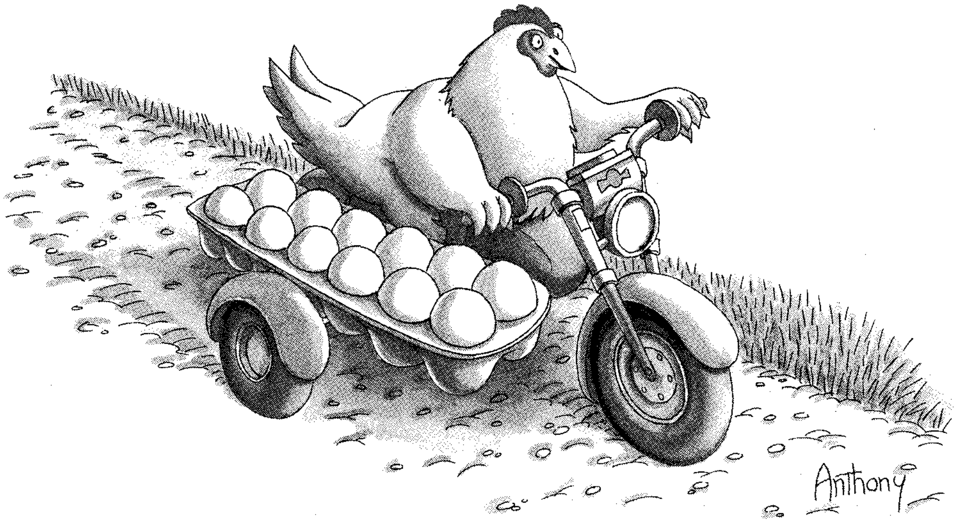
"None of them ever sat on my bed the way you are," said Chaya.

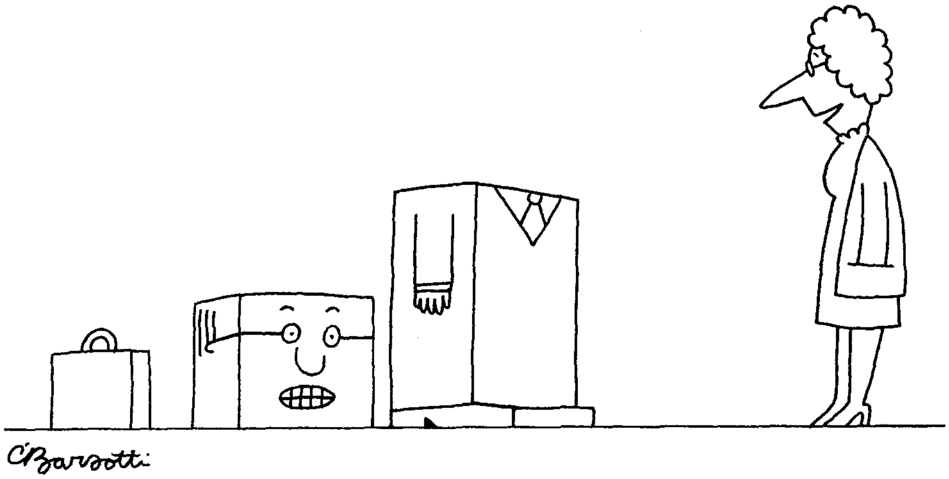
Nathan wondered for a moment exactly what she meant by this, and then, in the next moment, leaned toward her and kissed her lips. This was done only on an off-chance, and he had not expected that she would take such forceful hold of his body. Startled, and without a clue about what he ought to do next, he put one hand on the nape of her neck, the other at the small of her back, and then he lay very still in her arms. He could feel the bones of her hips pressing against him through the thin terry cloth of the towel like a pair of fists, and his lips and somehow his breathing became entangled in her hair. The laundered smell of her bedclothes was overpowering and sweet.

"Are you a virgin, Nathan?" she said, her mouth very close to his.

He considered his reply much longer than he needed to, trying to phrase it as ambiguously as he could. "In a manner of speaking," he said at last, blushing in self-congratulation at the urbanity of this reply.

Her grip upon him relaxed, and she drew back slowly and then fell against her pillow, looking calm again. He had the feeling that she had been hoping for some reply totally other than the one he had given. Then Chaya sighed, in a bored, theatrical way that to Nathan's





"You're home, dear—that's the main thing."

ears sounded very grown-up, and he was afraid, at last, that she really might have become a skeezer, that it really was possible to lose track of someone so completely that they turned into someone else without your knowing about it.

"Can you still draw eyeballs?" he said.

"Eyeballs?" she said, her face blank. "Sure, I can."

"Chaya! Mara!" called Dr. Feldman from somewhere in the house. His voice resounded like an axe blow. "That's enough!"

They both started, and stared a moment at one another.

"Can I tell you something, Nathan?" she said. "When I get to Israel I'm *not* coming back."

"You have to come back," he said, taking her hand.

"Chaya!" thundered Dr. Feldman from very far away. "Go to sleep."

"I'll write you," said Chaya. "Give me your address."

"Sixty-four twenty-three Les Adieux Circle. Is he going to come down here?"

"No," she said. "He thinks you're my little sister. I'll never remember that address. Let me write it down."

"Oh, that's all right," said Nathan, getting up. "You don't need to write me a letter."

"No, wait. Hold on."

She climbed out of bed again, grinning, and went to a blue wooden desk under the stairs that led up to the first floor of the house. Nathan watched the play of her nightgown across her little behind as she bent over to open a drawer and then scrabbled around in it, looking for a pen. She found a sheet of pink stationery and began to scratch across it with a Smurf pencil.

"Chaya, I'd better go," said Nathan. He headed for the door.

"Wait!" said Chaya. She was writing furiously now, in a pointed, ribbony script almost like cursive Hebrew, and he waited, one hand on the knob, for her to finish, and hoped that Dr. Feldman would not call out again. When she put down her pencil, she took a red-white-and-blue airmail envelope from another drawer, folded the slip of pink paper in half, slid it into the envelope, and ran her tongue along the flap. Then she bent over the desk again and, brushing her hair from the face of the envelope, wrote out what Nathan knew even from a distance to be his name and address.

"There, I wrote you a letter from Jerusalem," she said, turning toward him. "Don't read it until tomorrow."

"O.K.," said Nathan. "Goodbye." He hugged her awkwardly, afraid that he might get an erection, and then eased open the basement door. "Have fun in Jerusalem."

"But I'm already there," she said, continuing in this teasing and mysterious vein. She put a hand on each of his shoulders and kissed him on the cheek. Nathan took the letter from her, a little uncertainly. Probably it was just a bunch of scribble, or an apology for not wanting to have sex with him.

"I know what you're doing!" said Dr. Feldman, with that weird Yisraeli accent of his, and Nathan went out into the night. He was not quite so drunk anymore, and this time the trip around the house, past the swimming pool, did not seem especially fine or ominous. The dog next door to the Feldmans' caught wind of Nathan and began to rail at him, and he ran through the gate, all the while trying to determine if Dr. Feldman and his Uzi were in pursuit. As he was running across the Feldmans' yard and into the neighbors', the white towel finally slipped from his waist and fell away, nearly tripping him; he left it to Chaya to explain how it got there, and went naked the rest of the way.

He came around to his side of the car and hesitated with a hand on the door. They were asleep, all three of them, Felix E. and Tiger slumped in opposite corners of the back seat, Buster stretched out across the front seat of the car. The radio played very softly and threw green light across Buster's thighs. They were snoring with the lustiness of children, and Nathan felt a surge of pity for them and wished that they might just keep on sleeping. When he got into the car, he knew, his friends would want to know what, or rather how much, Chaya had given him; and when he showed them the letter they would want to read what she had written. He was afraid that its contents might somehow embarrass him, and now he looked for somewhere to conceal it.

At first he considered retrieving the discarded towel, but he was afraid to go back, and anyway if he wrapped the letter in the towel it would make a pretty suspicious bundle. Then he looked around at the lawn on which they were parked, to see if it held any place in which he could hide the letter, but there was only the silver expanse of lawn, an entire neighborhood of grass and flat moonlight. Under the front windows of the neighbors' house stood one small row of bushes, and he tried poking the envelope deep into this, but you could see it from a mile away, reflecting the light of the moon like a shard of mirror glass, and he retrieved it and looked around again.

Just when he was about to give up and try to hide the letter somewhere in the Frenches' car itself, under a mat, or even in the glove compartment, he spotted a bird feeder, about twenty feet away, hanging from a low branch of a young maple tree. It was shaped like a small transparent house, with a peaked plastic roof and glass walls, about half filled with birdseed. Nathan unhooked it from its wire and turned it over, his hands shaking with fear and with the aptness of his plan. He pulled off the plastic base of the bird feeder and laid the letter amid the smooth and rattling seeds. When he returned the little house to its hook, the letter was nearly invisible, and he trotted back, with an air of coolness, to the big yellow LTD.

His friends clambered upright when Nathan climbed back into the car; they were sober and embarrassed, and slapped Nathan constantly on the side of his head. They demanded to know what had happened to him in Chaya's room, and as they drove slowly home he made up a story, filled with sophisticated orgasms, and accurate anatomical impressions, and some bits of sexual dialogue in half-remembered Hebrew. The other boys seemed on the whole to believe him, although they were surprised, and blamed malt liquor and hormonal agitation, when halfway through the tale Nathan suddenly burst into tears—then stopped, and resumed his lying account.

The next night Nathan sneaked out of the house after his mother and Ed had gone to sleep. He rode half an hour on his bicycle, through the darkness, to retrieve the letter from Jerusalem. There was no moon, and black shapes seemed to dart and loom across his path. He pulled up in front of the Feldmans' house and contemplated it for a moment, straddling the hard bar of his bike. There was no sign of the towel he had dropped. He hated it that Chaya was not there in her house anymore, that she could so quickly be gone. He had a great curiosity to read what she had written him, but when he crept across to open up the little bird feeder, past the two long scars in the lawn from the wheels of the LTD, he found there was nothing inside it anymore but birdseed. The hairs on the back of his neck stood on end, and he whirled, half expecting to see Chaya, with the letter in her hand, laughing at him from behind the curtain in the low side window of her bedroom. He looked around on the grass, in the row of low shrubs, in the branches of the maple, but the letter was nowhere to be found, and after a few more minutes of baffled searching he got back on his bicycle and pedalled home. As he lay in bed that night he tried to imagine what she might have set down in her letter, what professions of love, what unhappiness, what nonsense, what shame, what news of the planet of her childhood. Then he fell asleep.

ONE Saturday, a few weeks afterward, Nathan and his stepfather were in the kitchen, trying to work their way out of an incipient argument about whether or not tuna salad ought to be made with chopped gherkins, the way Ed's grandmother had always made it. The dispute was merely the latest and perhaps the most trivial in what was becoming a disheartening routine for Nathan and Ed, and this particular volley of intransigent politeness had just begun to make Nathan's stomach hurt—without inclining him to capitulate—when Mrs. Shapiro-Knipper entered the kitchen, carrying the Saturday mail.

"Two things," she said, handing Nathan two envelopes, one of them tricolor and heartstopping.

"I'm going to put pickles," said Ed. "You'll see. It's an acquired taste."

This time, though everything Ed liked to eat, from raw oysters to pizza with pineapple and ham, seemed to be an acquired taste, Nathan let it pass. He rose from the kitchen table and carried the two letters out into the hallway and down to his bedroom. The second, in a plain business envelope, was evidently from his father, who had never before sent a letter to Nathan, and Nathan sat on his bed for a long time without opening them, just thinking about mailmen, and sealed envelopes, and the mysteries of the post.

He supposed that the neighbor had found Chaya's letter hidden in the bird feeder before Nathan could retrieve it, and had finally gotten around to affixing a stamp to it and sending it along. Since, in the past weeks, Nathan had decided that he was in love with Chaya, and had been busy erecting all the necessary buttresses and towers and fluttering pennants in his imagination, the surprise arrival of her letter, which he had presumed lost, was a delicious addition to the structure, and he delayed as long as he could stand it before finally tearing the envelope open.

DEAR NATHAN,

Sometimes it is very hot here. I have a thousand boyfriends. It is scary if a gun goes off in the night.

You made me laugh a lot of times in class I remember.

"Take it easy."

Love,
CHAYA

He was sharply disappointed. He hated the fact that he had made her laugh, for one thing; and it angered him, unreasonably, he knew, that all the other things she had written—and there were so few of them—were hypothetical, as insubstantial as her Planet of the Birds, or as his parents' marriage, or as the baby that was growing in his stepmother's belly. He stuffed the bogus letter back into the envelope and tore it to pieces.

He was still feeling badly when at last he brought himself to open the letter from his father. It was a brief, barely legible note, on a sheet of legal paper. After some facetious chitchat about the Red Sox and Ricky's karate lessons, Nathan's father had written, "Your mother tells me that you have made some new friends and she is a little worried because you're going around with your shoes untied. Tie your shoelaces. Don't be angry with us, Nate. I know that everything seems different now, but you have to get used to it. I will always love you as much as I will love any new Shapiros that come along."

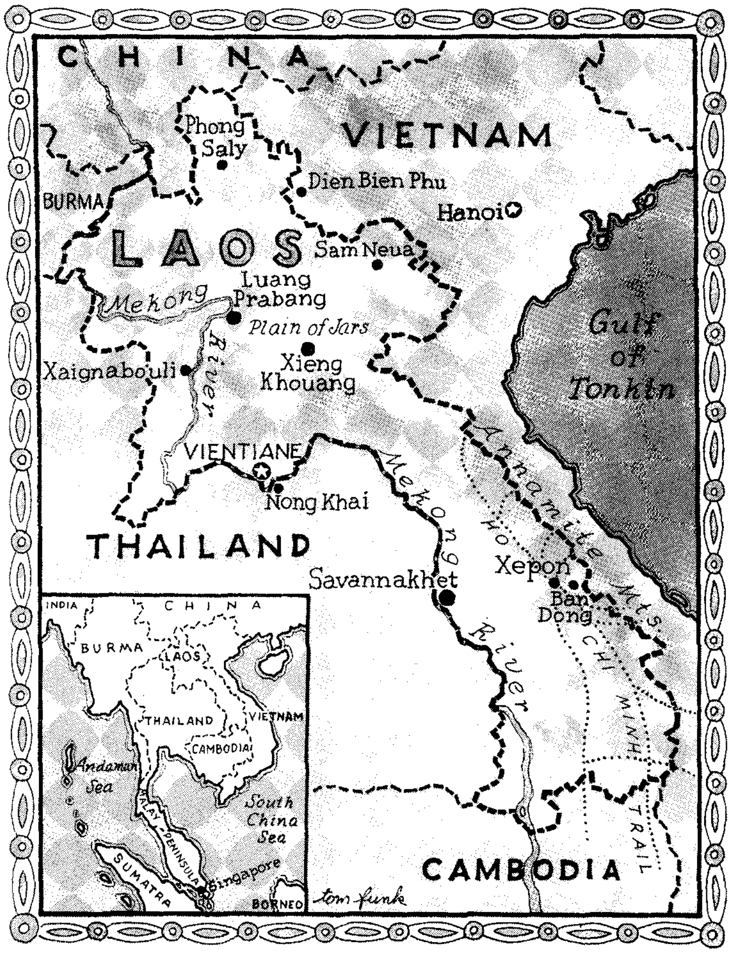
"Nathan?" his mother called to him through the door of his room. "Come on and eat."

"I hate it with gherkins," said Nathan, but his heart had gone out of the argument, and he stood up to join his mother and Ed for lunch. Hastily he dried his eyes, and scrambled to gather up the letter from his father and the scraps of Chaya's letter, which were scattered across his bed. It was as he laid them carefully in the Roi-Tan cigar box in which he kept his most important papers that he noticed the strange and beautiful postage stamp in the torn corner of the airmail envelope, and the postmark, printed in an alien script.

—MICHAEL CHABON

A REPORTER AT LARGE

FORGOTTEN COUNTRY



FOR anyone accustomed to American roads, the drive east on Route 9 across the hundred-and-twenty-mile width of southern Laos is a bone-jarring experience. As Route 9 leaves the port city of Savannakhet, on the Mekong River, the asphalt ends, and the views are obscured by clouds of dust kicked up by passing trucks. After a few miles, the pavement starts again, but for many stretches the surface undulates like a washboard, and there are countless potholes. Yet this narrow, two-lane road, which would be considered laughably inadequate anywhere in the United States, is for Laos a veritable superhighway. Far more typical of the country than Route 9 is Route 13, on which one drives from Vientiane, the capital, to Luang Prabang, the old royal capital, a hundred and forty miles to the north. Much of Route 13 is little more than a dirt path snaking through mountains, a road so bad that there is no bus service between the two cities, although they're the most important cities in Laos. But Route 13 hardly represents the worst of the country's transportation problems. When David Merchant and Lois Foehringer, an American couple working on aid projects in Laos for the Mennonite Central Committee, the relief-and-development arm of the Mennonite Church, visit Phong Saly Province—the northernmost province of Laos, on the China border—they have to travel for three and a half days by boat and then are met by provincial authorities and given a jolting ride up the side of a mountain in a four-wheel-drive truck. The truck itself arrived by boat, having been cut into two pieces for the voyage. For eight months or so of each year, Phong Saly Province is accessible only by helicopter, because the water level is too low for boat traffic.

There were no such problems on Route 9. It had been built during a ten-year period, starting in 1978, as an aid project sponsored largely by the government of Vietnam, with Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union contributing bridges, and internees in a Laotian "reëducation camp" supplying some of the labor. As I bounced along the first ninety-odd miles, in a four-door Japanese truck in the company of the driver and four government officials, I was able to view an Asian landscape unmarked by the centuries—a procession of rice fields and primitive villages, the houses of wood, bamboo, and thatch standing on stilts to keep them above the floods of the rainy season. We climbed into the foothills of the Annamite Mountains, which straddle the Laos-Vietnam border, and the scenery slowly changed from paddy fields rimmed by dikes to rocky, overgrown terrain. And then my Laotian interpreter began to point out bomb craters, often twenty or thirty feet in diameter, along the side of the road. Some of the poorer villages, lacking bulldozers, were built on a sea of craters; to get from one house to the next, you had to walk along the rims. At Xepon, a village of five thousand that serves as a district capital, one crater, a few yards from the road and almost at the front door of a house, contained a large rusted-metal object—a bomb that had never exploded.

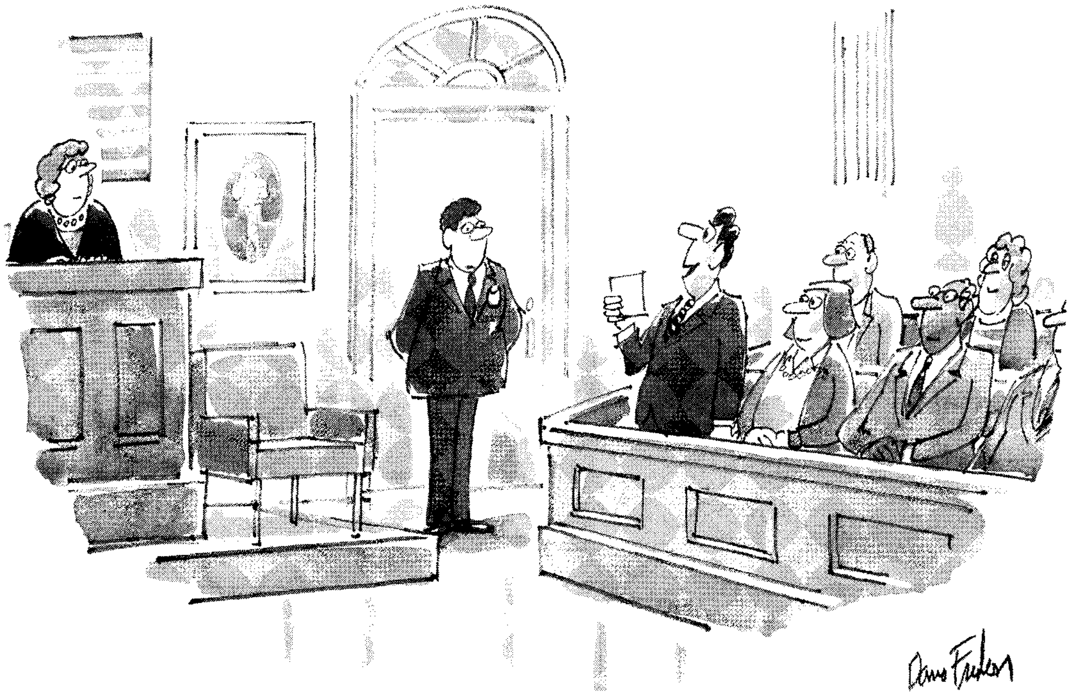
Just a few minutes' ride past Xepon lies the village of Ban Dong, twenty-one miles from the Vietnamese border. Ban Dong is built on the flotsam of war. Parts of airplanes and of bombs serve as support beams for houses, as boats on a nearby river, and even as bowls for food. One homeowner has transformed a bomb crater into a decorative pond, the banks lined with a neatly stacked display of artillery-shell casings. A circle of cluster-bomb cannisters makes a border around a big shade tree. Two cluster-bomb cannisters attached to the ends of a wooden pole have become a barbell for weight-lifting exercises. And children play on a pile of war debris stacked in the center of the village; the metal, which represents the area's only "cash crop," will soon be shipped by truck to Savannakhet and sold to Thailand as scrap. At Ban Dong, we parked our truck and walked along a narrow, rutted dirt road that intersected with Route 9. No sign identified the road; there was nothing to indicate that it wasn't just another of the dozens of tracks that crisscross the Annamite Mountains. But this particular track happened to be one of the best-known roads in the world: it was the main route of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

The Ho Chi Minh Trail, and especially this key junction near Xepon, had been central to America's nine-year secret war in Laos, orchestrated by the Central Intelligence Agency and directed from the American Embassy compound in Vientiane. Although the C.I.A. managed to recruit a mercenary army of thirty thousand Hmong, an ethnic group that lives in the mountainous regions of Laos, and although several hundred American fliers lost their lives in Laos, news of the operation had been successfully hidden from the American people for most of the time between 1964 and 1973. Many of the details didn't emerge until 1987, when Christopher Robbins, a British journalist, published a book on the secret war called "The Ravens," which was based on interviews with many of the American pilots who fought in it; they used "Ravens" as their code name for the war. "There was another war even nastier than the one in Vietnam, and so secret that the location of the country in which it was being fought was classified," Robbins wrote. "The cognoscenti simply referred to it as 'the Other Theatre.' The men who chose to fight in it were handpicked volunteers, and anyone accepted for a tour seemed to disappear as if from the face of the earth. The pilots in the Other Theatre were military men, but flew into battle in civilian clothes—denim cutoffs, T-shirts, cowboy hats, and dark glasses."

The American effort was two-pronged: the first aim was to disrupt the flow of men and matériel coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail from North Vietnam to South Vietnam; the second was to cut the route across the Plain of Jars, in the north, which the Pathet Lao, the Laotian Communist forces, might take from their strongholds along the Vietnam border if they decided to march on Vientiane. The war was fought largely with bombs—an unprecedented rain of bombs. By 1973, when the bombing stopped, the United States had dropped 2,093,100 tons of bombs on Laos; the tonnage was a third higher than that of the American bombs that devastated Nazi Germany in the Second World War, and three times the tonnage dropped during the Korean War. The total number of sorties during that period was five hundred and eighty thousand nine hundred and forty-four—an average of a hundred and seventy-seven a day, or one planeload of bombs every eight minutes around the clock for nine years. The cost of the bombing was seven billion two hundred million dollars, or more than two million dollars a day. (That daily figure is almost exactly the amount that Laos—a nation where the average life expectancy is forty-five, and the government is so poor that many of its teachers have had to go without salaries—received in all of 1988 from other countries, United Nations programs, and private relief groups to finance seventy-seven health and education projects.) Yet the bombing failed to achieve either of its objectives. Year after year, the Ho Chi Minh Trail was improved, to the point where it had an oil pipeline and underground repair shops, and could accommodate the largest available tanks and trucks. By 1971, North Vietnam had used it to move six hundred and thirty thousand troops into the south and to keep up a steady stream of supplies to equip and feed them. And the bombing certainly did nothing to stop the Pathet Lao forces from building up their strength; peasants being bombed out of their homes made easy recruiting targets, and in 1975 Pathet Lao troops entered Vientiane victoriously without firing a shot. On December 2nd of that year, meeting in the gymnasium of a former American school in Vientiane, the Pathet Lao abolished the monarchy and established the Lao People's Democratic Republic, thereby taking over a nation whose economy lay in ruins.

LUKE WARM & OVER E-Z:
THE WORLD'S BLANDEST RAPPERS
Do you like my sweater? I really do. It only comes in white and light blue. HUH.
These fine pants Are a cheerful plaid. They're the best slacks A guy ever had. HUH.

Few American visitors have had an opportunity to travel along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and observe the devastation that still remains from the bombing. But any unease I felt at the prospect of doing so quickly evaporated, thanks to the reception I was accorded. Those who lived through the bombing, and even those who were maimed by it, treated me with unfailing courtesy and cheerfulness. On our way up Route 9, my interpreter, who was an employee of the Foreign Ministry, had suggested that since we would arrive in Xepon too late for dinner we stop to buy food, so at a roadside stand we picked up barbecued chicken and a bag of frogs grilled to a crisp, both extricated from a swarm of flies. But when we arrived in Xepon, where we were to stay at the district leader's house, we discovered that he had arranged a special dinner for us at the local restaurant. The dinner included at least a dozen courses, but he apologized profusely, saying that he hadn't had enough notice to plan anything elaborate. In my honor, the meal concluded with a delicacy that occasionally finds its way into Laos from neighboring Thailand—a platter of Spam.



"Before I read our verdict, I'd like to announce that as soon as court adjourns, some of us will be appearing on television to discuss the case, and we hope you'll all tune in."

• •

The district leader, a jovial man of forty named Lahoun Maphangvong, described his life under the rain of bombs. "Nothing stood on the earth," he told me, through my interpreter. "Every building was destroyed. We all went into the mountains and lived in caves, or else stayed in the jungle. My family and I lived in the jungle about eighteen miles from Xepon for eight years, from 1964 to 1972. We dug a pit to sleep in, and covered it with logs and thatch. We grew our own rice, and the North Vietnamese troops gave us essentials, like salt. The heaviest bombings were in 1965 and 1966. During that time, much of the land was destroyed by defoliants sprayed by the airplanes. When the spraying took place, it looked as if everything had been burned by a fire; every leaf fell off every tree. The defoliants got into the drinking water and the vegetables, and some people died from that. There was much vomiting and there were skin diseases, and many people couldn't eat." The use of defoliants remained a secret far longer than the bombing itself. Only in 1982 did the United States Air Force confirm charges by antiwar groups that it had dumped two hundred thousand gallons of herbicides on Laos in 1965 and 1966.

I asked Lahoun (in Lao, people are addressed by their first name, not their family name, even when an honorific is used) a question about what had been for me one of the greatest puzzles of the Vietnam War: Why did the bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail—a bombing whose tonnage per square mile was the greatest in history—fail to disrupt North Vietnamese supply lines? I told him about an interview I had had in Bangkok with Robert Karniol, the Asia-Pacific editor of *Jane's Defence Weekly* and an experienced analyst of military tactics. Karniol had said that bombs were simply not effective weapons against a guerrilla movement in the jungle. "Essentially, all that happens is that you make a few holes in the ground, and they are later filled up," he had said. "You destroy a few trucks, and they are replaced. You kill some people, and they are replaced also. You can make things uncomfortable, but airplanes can't stop people. You have to physically possess the territory."

Lahoun nodded in agreement, and told me what he had witnessed when the bombs fell: "During times when the bombing was too intense for trucks, the soldiers took the supplies and balanced them on poles. Then they put the poles on bicycles, and walked alongside the bicycles on small paths under the cover of jungle. The airplanes couldn't see them there. The North Vietnamese lost a lot of troops, but the supplies never stopped coming."

Lahoun went on to say that the suffering didn't end with the cessation of the bombing. The United States had carpeted the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the Plain of Jars, and other areas of Laos with cluster-bomb units, or C.B.U.s. A "mother bomb"—a cannister that looked like a giant pea pod—would be timed to open at a predetermined altitude after it was dropped, scattering tennis-ball-size bomblets over an area of about five thousand square yards. Each bomblet—called an anti-personnel bomblet by the military and a *bombi* by the Laotians—contained about two hundred and fifty steel pellets. Some of the bomblets were rigged to detonate on hitting the ground, spraying all the people and animals in the area with pellets. Others would sink into the ground and detonate only when something hit them. Thousands upon thousands of these bomblets are still buried today, and they are frequently set off by an unsuspecting farmer swinging a hoe. "When you set off a *bombi*, an explosive device blows the pellets out, and they can scatter six or eight feet around," I was told by Jacqui Cha-

Bernard Schoenbaum

"Water . . . water . . ."

gnon, who until mid-April worked in Laos for the American Friends Service Committee, and from whom I learned about the *bombis*. "So if children are playing by the side of their parents they are often killed or injured as well. On the Plain of Jars last year, we were clearing land about the size of two football fields with a metal detector, to build a teacher-training school. We found eighteen *bombis*, two medium-sized unexploded bombs, and one large bomb buried nose down so that we couldn't defuse it. We had to bury the whole bomb. In Xieng Khouang Province, on the Plain of Jars, anywhere from five to ten people are killed or injured by *bombis* every month." The injured, if they're near enough to the provincial capital, can seek medical care at the province's one hospital, which was built by Mongolia. It has no general-anesthesiology facilities, no sophisticated techniques to stop bleeding, no way to deal with shock.

Early the next morning in Xepon, Lahoun was standing outside his house talking with a neighbor—a woman who had only one leg. I asked her if she would tell me her story, and she readily agreed, speaking cheerfully and with complete ease, although she had been told that I was an American. In 1968, when she was nineteen, she said, she had stepped on a *bombi* on her way through the jungle to work in a rice field. Local villagers took her to a makeshift hospital that had been dug into the ground in the jungle, and a North Vietnamese doctor amputated her shattered leg. The leg was replaced by a prosthesis that the villagers made for her from a bombsight tube recovered from a downed American airplane.

"Just a week ago, three teen-age boys in a nearby village hit a *bombi* while they were digging a garden," Lahoun said. "One of them, who was fifteen years old, died after two days, because a pellet had penetrated his brain. The two others survived, but they'll have to have operations to remove pellets from their bodies."

After breakfast, the government officials and I set out in our truck for a tour of the area. Not only had the wreckage of planes and bombs been fashioned into many essentials of life—swords into plowshares—but the sale of scrap metal had provided the money to rebuild the villages that the bombing had destroyed. In one instance, however, potential scrap metal had been left untouched. The wreckage of two South Vietnamese tanks still stood near Ban Dong, as a monument to a battle, code-named Lamson 719, that took place in 1971—one of the most disastrous undertakings of the Vietnam War. After six years of futile bombing, Lamson represented a change in tactics, an effort to cut the supply lines by seizing the strategically important portion of the Ho Chi Minh Trail around Xepon. The battle plan had been devised by the Americans, but the South Vietnamese, aided by American air cover, did the actual fighting. According to Christopher Robbins, the invasion was planned at the Pentagon, and the planners used a map showing no topographical features, and so were unaware that the South Vietnamese would have to cross high mountain ridges, which ran north and south, while the North Vietnamese could pour reinforcements in through a series of valleys. With bad weather limiting air support, the invasion turned into a rout: of the seventeen-thousand-man South Vietnamese invasion force, five thousand were killed or wounded, and a hundred and seventy-six Americans died. All that remains of the battle today is the two wrecked tanks. Laughing children who had been following us ran to clamber over them.

That afternoon, we stopped back in Xepon to say goodbye to Lahoun and thank him for putting us up at his house; he had refused to accept any money, explaining that he had been doing his duty as a district official. This time, Lahoun, who had smiled almost constantly, even when he was talking about the horrors of the war, was unusually solemn. He had apparently spent the day making calculations and entering figures in a notebook, and he clearly wanted to present them to me in as formal a manner as possible, to impress me with their gravity. He sat at the head of a table, motioned to me and my interpreter to be seated, and cleared his throat and began. "The district of Xepon extends along Route 9 for seventy-five miles, to the Vietnam border," he said. "We had been a liberated area since 1960, and that was one reason we were one of the

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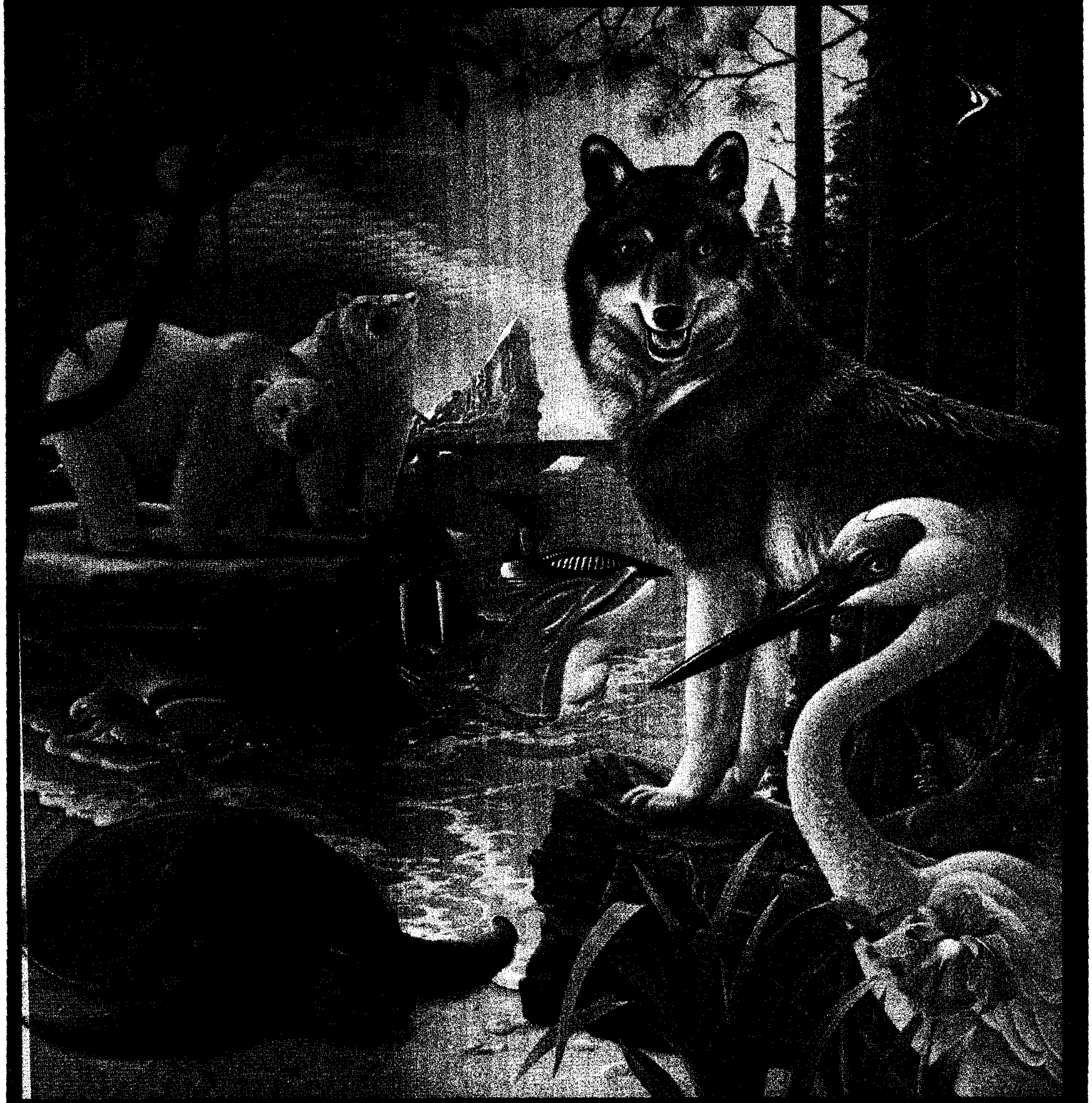

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most heavily bombed regions. In our district, there are two hundred villages. The bombing destroyed sixty-five hundred and fifty-seven houses—every house in the district. Five thousand buildings that were used to store rice were also destroyed. In the nine years of war, fifteen hundred people died in Xepon, out of a population of forty-five thousand. Eighteen hundred cows and water buffalo were killed out of about six thousand. In four villages, the majority of the people died. Since 1975, at least three persons a year in the district have been killed by a *bombi*.”

“THE Laotians have the ability to live with contradictions in a way that Westerners can’t,” an American who lives in Vientiane told me. And everywhere in Laos contradictions, paradoxes, ironies abound. They can be seen in little things. At one of the bustling outdoor markets, a Laotian teen-ager walks down the street wearing a gray T-shirt stencilled “U.S. AIR FORCE.” In Vientiane, every day at dawn and dusk, loudspeakers blare out the broadcasts of the municipal radio station, but now instead of urging people to fulfill their day’s production quota the announcers read commercials for soft drinks, soap, textiles, and beer. At Lao Radio and Television, the deputy director—from such a Francophone family that he has both a French and a Lao name and didn’t learn to read and write Lao until he took lessons from a monk while he was studying at the Sorbonne—escorted me on a tour of the premises, speaking elegant British-accented English. As we entered the English-language broadcasting studio, a shrill-voiced female announcer was denouncing “the lackeys of American imperialism.”

In all of Laos, however, the most striking contradiction lies in the boomtown atmosphere of Vientiane; the city seems almost phantasmagorical in view of the desperate poverty that grips this nation, which was ravaged first by the Vietnam War and then by Stalinist economic strictures imposed by the Pathet Lao. By every objective yardstick, the Laotian economy barely functions. Per-capita income is a hundred and fifty-six dollars a year. There are so few exports that the sale of overflight rights to commercial airlines is one of the major sources of hard currency. More than eight hundred American companies have revenues each year larger than Laos’s entire gross national product: it was five hundred and forty-six million dollars in 1988. The latest count shows sixty-four hundred and fifty-one telephones in the entire country, and many of them don’t work; when I tried to phone a high Laotian government official from Bangkok, I first had to call a Thai businessman in Vientiane, and he agreed to send someone to get that official for my second call, half an hour later. Until this spring, Laos was connected with the world, except for Thailand and the Soviet Union, by a single phone line: only one incoming or outgoing call could take place at any one time. (Now, thanks to an Australian aid project, calls are routed through an Australian satellite.) The infant-mortality rate is a hundred and nine for each thousand live births—three times that of Thailand and more than ten times that of the United States. Illiteracy is so widespread that candidates at one teachers’ training school complete grades one through five so that they can then teach grades one through three. In this country, which is the size of Oregon and has a population of just four million, more than three-quarters of the people live in rural areas, subsisting on what they can grow and what they can hunt in the jungles. One American aid worker told me that he travelled widely around Laos, and, in a mimeographed newsletter, he described life in a typical village: “The diet is a monotonous parade of rice, soup broth, and fermented fish. School is a little bamboo hut with grades one through three; the nearest junior high school is at least a day’s walk away. The village doctor uses herbs and roots to cure sickness. The nearest clinic is 20 miles away, but remember you have to walk. Sickness and death are frequent companions of the young and elderly. Life is a struggle, with most of one’s labor consumed in monotonous tasks like carrying water, pounding husks off the rice, and hoeing the soil.”

Such poverty can also be seen in Luang Prabang, an ancient city of Buddhist temples and pagodas which stands in a northern valley carved from the mountains by the Mekong River, and whose physical isolation has served as an effective barrier to any economic changes. Although Luang Prabang is the religious center of Laos and the site of the former Royal Palace—which the Pathet Lao maintain for visits by tourists, even though they deposed the king—it has only one channel of transportation besides the tortuous road from Vientiane, on which the hundred-and-forty-mile trip may take as long as four days. That channel is a single flight each day from Vientiane, on a rusted Antonov-24 owned by Lao Aviation, the state airline. A round trip costs a Laotian sixteen dollars, which is a month’s salary for many workers, and even someone who is able to come up with the sixteen dollars has trouble getting a seat because foreigners, who pay sixty-five dollars, have priority. Northern Laos is the poorest part of the country, and Luang Prabang—with a population of sixty thousand, which makes it the third-largest city, just behind Savannakhet—has remained relatively unchanged for decades. Water buffalo lie asleep on the streets; Buddhist monks hold out their bowls for donations of food; Hmong women, dressed in black clothing blazing with bright-colored embroidery, walk in from mountain villages to sell jewelry and embroidered fabrics. During the driest period, when for a few months water levels are low and there is little hydroelectricity, lanterns provide the only illumination for most of the city. The airport consists of a landing strip and a tiny two-room building; departing passengers can wait at home until they hear the plane arriving from Vientiane.

If Laos as a whole speaks of backwardness and poverty, Vientiane delivers an entirely different message. Still called Vieng Chan by Laotians (Vientiane is a French-imposed version of the name), it looks like a city that has awakened from a long sleep and gone excitedly to work. Vientiane is a capital of no special beauty, since most of its buildings are decrepit and badly in need of paint. Its broadest avenue, Lane Xang, is the disastrous result of an attempt to create a boulevard in the Parisian style. (Lane Xang, which means Land of a Million Elephants, is the name of the ancient Lao kingdom.) The avenue runs about a mile, from the Presidential Palace, on the Mekong River, to a huge monument on a traffic circle that is meant to resemble

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A real gentleman, your father-in-law.

So the next time you visit, make the right impression by employing the Golden Rule. Along with his daughter, bring him a bottle of Ballantine's Finest.

When you touch glasses, murmuring an appreciative toast, savor the moment contemplating the woman whose life you share. Then lift the golden spirit and drink in the smooth, mellow flavor with a hint of peat and a breath of smoke.

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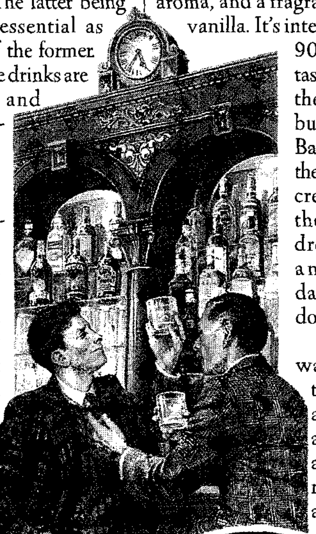
In the homes, pubs and hotel bars of Scotland there is a time-honored ritual, handed down from father to son, for the enjoyment of Scotch whisky. It involves clean glasses, moderate amounts of the amber nectar, and a penchant for spirited conversation. The latter being just as essential as either of the former. Once the drinks are poured and pleasantries exchanged, the typical debate begins.

Ballantine's Finest: Good taste instilled and maintained.



One rather opinionated participant firmly maintains that the best single malt Scotch whisky comes from the Highlands. Another is adamant in support of the Orkney Island whiskies from the far north. For another, nothing but a softer, sweeter Lowland malt will do, while a staunch advocate of the bold, peaty flavor of Islay insists on being heard. Being Scots, each remains convinced that his opinion is correct, in perpetuity.

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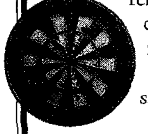

Of course, when all is said and done, many prefer a blended Scotch like Ballantine's Finest. Because Ballantine's blends 42 of the top single malts from all over Scotland, the taste of the Finest tends to resolve disputes in a most diplomatic manner.

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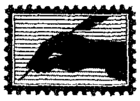
Can you detect the subtle fragrance of heather?

Swirl it around, feeling the heft of the glass as the golden liquid shifts from side to side. Notice the malty aroma, and a fragrance reminiscent of vanilla. It's interesting to note that 90% of your sense of taste is centered not in the tongue or mouth, but in the nose. In fact, Ballantine's blenders, the legendary men who create and preserve the Finest, test hundreds of single malts and blends on a daily basis. And they do it with their noses.

Now add a little water and hold it up to the light. It's a beautiful sight as the clear water and golden Scotch mingle together in a shimmering waltz of higher chemistry. Your anticipation builds. Lift the glass and take a sip.

The first thing you may notice is a cool, slightly sweet taste. Let the smooth liquid float on your tongue for a moment before swallowing. Then a mellow whiff of peat makes its presence known, and finally, a soft brush of smoke in the finish. It's as if all the virtues of all the wonderful, diverse, eccentric Scotch whiskies landed in your glass at once.

Even though your nose might be the final authority, we'll understand if your taste buds are also impressed.



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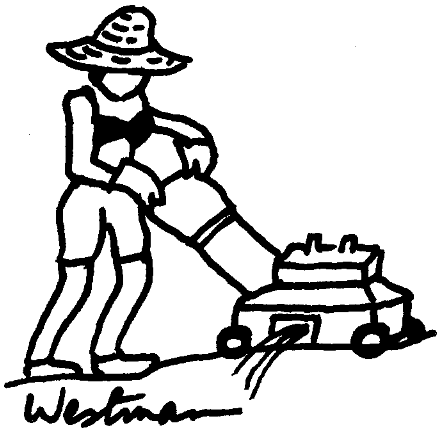
L'Étoile, in Paris. The monument, whose construction started in the nineteen-sixties, with American cement intended for a runway at the airport, looks like a squat, ill-proportioned version of the Arc de Triomphe topped by an astonishing wedding-cake structure resembling an Oriental palace with Byzantine spires and Gothic gargoyles. When you climb to the top of it, the buildings of Vientiane, all of which are small and unimposing, seem to disappear beneath the tropical foliage. Croaking frogs in ditches alongside Lane Xang Avenue outnumber pedestrians, and the traffic circle, which could accommodate hundreds of vehicles, gets only a trickle of cars, mostly Russian and Japanese. Still, they represent an automotive boom compared with the vehicles that existed here a few years ago. Most people in Vientiane get about on bicycles.

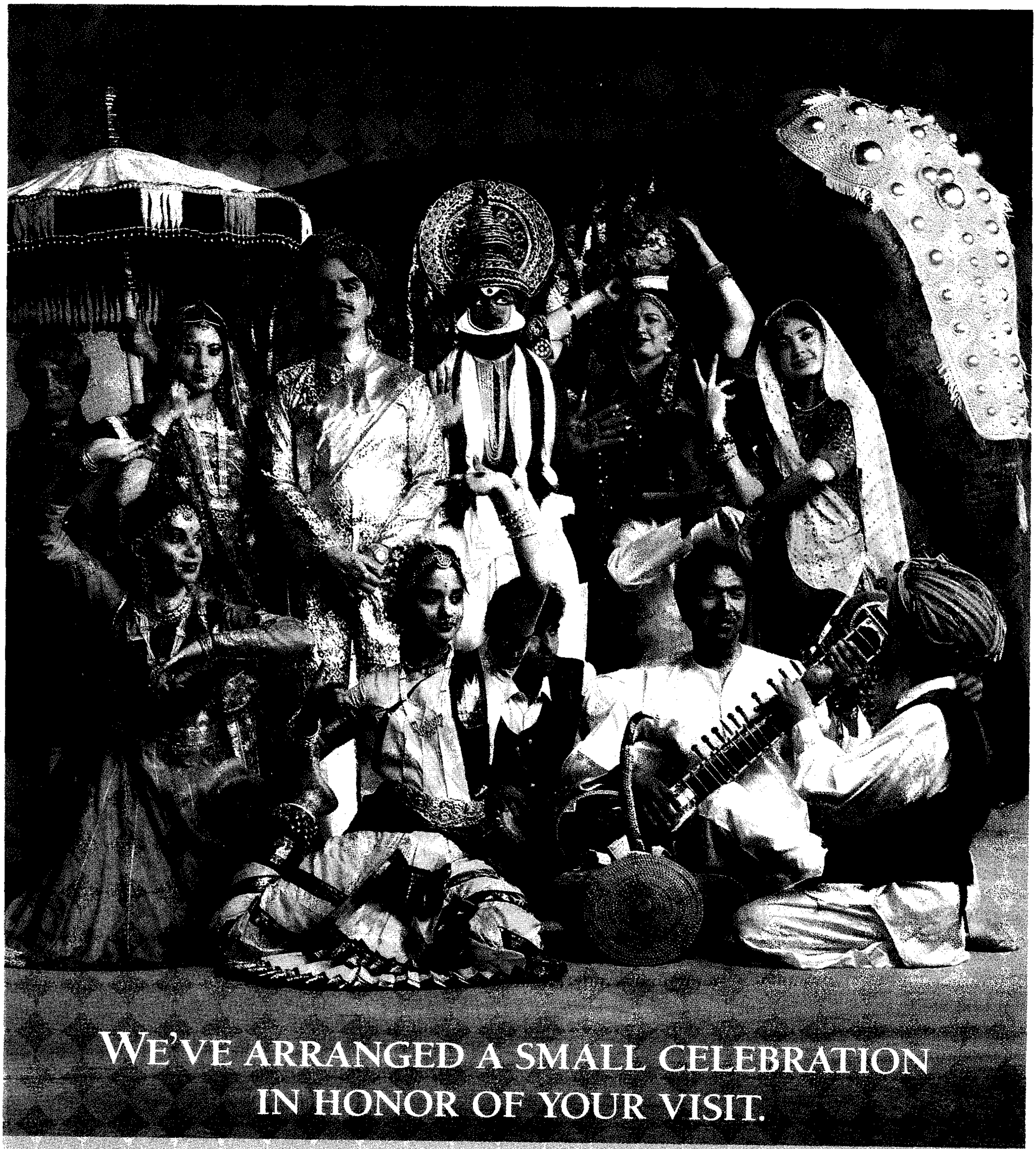
Although Vientiane may not have fulfilled the vision of French colonialists who dreamed of a European-style capital, it does have considerable charm. In the evening, the sun is a fiery red ball as it disappears into the Mekong, and then the twinkling lights of Thailand appear in the distance. Every morning, sidewalk food stalls offer basketfuls of freshly baked baguettes, which are one of the few French influences remaining; the Laotians eat the baguettes with fish sauce sprinkled on them. Many of Vientiane's neighborhoods resemble self-contained villages, with rutted dirt roads and traditional bamboo-and-thatch houses on stilts. A Western visitor who leaves the commercial and government areas and walks through these neighborhoods is mobbed by curious children, and adults extend greetings with shy smiles. Visitors to Vientiane before 1975 saw a wide-open city, where brothels and drugs were as readily available as they were in Bangkok, but today Vientiane displays a puritanical innocence, which seems much more in the Laotian character. Laotians are delighted to respond when a Westerner approaches them to start a conversation, but no one will come up to you outside your hotel to lure you with the prospect of taxis, guides, cut-rate merchandise, or hinted-at pleasures; such aggressiveness, common in almost every other Third World country, is alien to the Laotian temperament. I never saw a beggar in Laos, and no child ever asked me for candy or money. "They're the ultimately tolerant people—they never get upset," a World Bank official in Vientiane said. "If you give them something, they say 'Thank you.' If you give them nothing, they also say 'Thank you.' "

What was once a torpid colonial capital had been further sedated by a Communist government that made individual initiative a potentially dangerous activity. Two years ago, residents say, most of the stores in the central commercial district were shuttered and unoccupied. But, suddenly, Vientiane sprang alive, and now almost all the stores are active. The biggest market, which covers acres of ground not far from the Presidential Palace, is overflowing with the latest Japanese electronic goods, Thai clothes, and Thai foods; it is called the Morning Market, but that has become a misnomer, for it's now jammed throughout the day. A few years ago, there was no such thing as a Laotian restaurant in Vientiane. Now Laotian food is served at dozens of places, and new ones are opening almost every week. The drab buildings housing hotels, restaurants, and shops are today incongruously brightened by strings of blinking Christmas-tree lights, and the Lane Xang Hotel, the best in town, also features on its façade a flashing neon hammer and sickle. And, in a country whose dour, serious-minded government stamped out any remnant of night life when it came to power, fifteen years ago, at least a dozen discothèques are now blasting their music past midnight, for although a curfew remains on the books it is universally ignored.

The new restaurants, the discothèques, the stereos in the market, and the other aspects of a revitalized Vientiane owe their existence to a manifestation of *perestroika* which is extraordinary even in the current world of upheaval in the Communist bloc. The economic reforms of other Communist nations have been preceded by new leadership, bringing new ideas, but the Laotian version of *perestroika* did not result from any change in leadership: most of the elderly, hard-line Pathet Lao who still govern Laos have worked together since the Second World War, when they headed an arm of Ho Chi Minh's Indo-Chinese Communist Party. Nor were the reforms spurred by street demonstrations: Westerners who live in Vientiane say they haven't heard of a single protest—not a peep of dissent from any source. Yet the Pathet Lao leadership, without abandoning its Marxist rhetoric, and without allowing the smallest degree of political opposition, has instituted an economic restructuring as broad as anything to be found in Eastern Europe today. Although Laos has been firmly under the sway of the Soviet Union and, particularly, Vietnam, these reforms preceded the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev by many years—they started in 1979, when the state backed off from its policy of collective farms—and have run well ahead of hesitant efforts by the Vietnamese to change their own economy. Known as *chin ta nakan mai*, or "new thinking," the Laotian reforms can also be described as "*perestroika* without *glasnost*," or the carrying out of economic reforms without accompanying political changes—precisely the formula that failed so disastrously for the leaders of China. The secretive Pathet Lao have cast off the Stalinist economic doctrines and broken dramatically with the past.



Laos's economic reforms would impress the most unrepentant capitalist. In agriculture, farmers can now own their land, and, provided only that they pay taxes on their earnings, they can dispose of their crops in any way they want, at free-market prices; if a state agency needs to buy rice or any other crop, it has to compete with private traders on the open market. As for the state-owned agricultural coöperatives that still exist, they must either show a profit or go out of business. The same applies to state-owned businesses and factories, and they now make their own decisions on production, investments, and pricing. Banking has been liberalized, and the first commercial bank, seventy per cent owned by Thai investors, opened its doors last year. A new investment code, enacted in July of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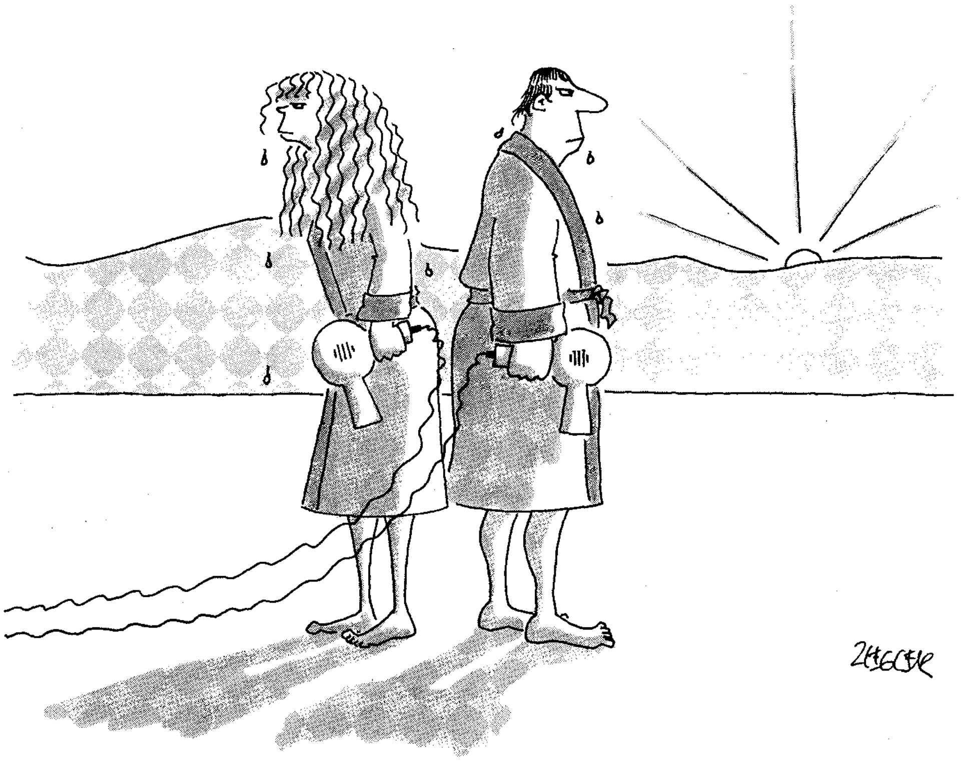

1988, authorizes both joint ventures and wholly owned foreign-investment projects. Foreign investors can repatriate their profits and, under the code, are protected against nationalization. This liberalized investment code lured a significant, if unlikely, participant in January, when the Hunt Oil Company—owned by a Texan whose family is known in part for its militant anti-Communism—signed a contract to explore for oil in southeastern Laos. "Privatization" is a word frequently heard; the government has leased its cigarette factory to a Thai investor, and a sheet-metal plant to a Thai-Laotian joint venture. Khammone Phonekeo, the Vice-Minister of Industry, told me that even Lao Aviation might become private. "We're still open," he said. "We don't know which things to keep."

It's not necessary to pore over investment codes and other regulations to recognize the dimensions of the reforms. A visitor to Vientiane experiences one result of the "new thinking" the moment he tries to change money. There is no black market, because the Laotian kip now floats free against the American dollar and the Thai baht, and all three currencies are readily accepted. (Visitors who use kip face one disadvantage, however: the largest kip banknote is worth only about seventy American cents, and most money changers try to palm off notes smaller than that. My first day in Laos, I changed a hundred-dollar bill without specifying the denomination of banknotes I would get in return, and I ended up with a plastic bag containing at least five pounds of currency.) In Laos, the setting of the exchange rate involves what is surely one of the world's most literal enactments of a "free market": early each day, an employee of Laos's central bank walks through the Morning Market to see how many kip the shopkeepers are offering per dollar, and what he finds determines what the nation's official exchange rate will be.

The fruits of these economic reforms can be observed all over Vientiane. To buy gasoline four years ago, for instance, it was necessary to wait in a long line at a state-owned station and present a ration coupon, but now there are several private gas stations, and a big Shell station in the center of town—one that would look at home in the United States—stays open until midnight. The gas stations are getting new business because, though Vientiane has yet to witness its first traffic jam, cars and other motor vehicles are being sold in increasing numbers. For example, the owner of a wool factory who sells his cloth to Thailand told me that he has provided his extended family with two Toyotas, a Volkswagen, and two motorbikes. All over Vientiane, teen-age boys in bluejeans, with hair over their shirt collars, zoom around on motorcycles or motorbikes, causing havoc on streets where drivers are normally so polite that they stop with a smile for the most brazen pedestrian. Just a few years ago, the hair length of those teen-agers could have landed them in a reëducation camp.

The government's new policy includes putting out the welcome mat for anyone who wants to participate in the economic rebirth—even those Laotians who were interned in reëducation camps in 1975, or who fled the country. Earlier this year, Souban Sritthirath, the Deputy Foreign Minister who is in charge of relations with the West, made a trip to the United States to tell Laotian-Americans precisely that. "I said to them that if they want to contribute to the development of Laos they should move back to start a business," Souban told me. "We'll give them all their property back if they stay six months and abandon their new citizenship." The American Embassy in Vientiane has reported that hundreds of Laotians who are now American citizens have returned for visits without incident, but so far only one has moved back to start a business. I met a returnee from France one night while I was eating at a place called Somchan's Pob & Restaurant. Seeing a Western face, the Pob's owner, Douane Siharth, sat down to tell me his story. "I lived in Paris for seven years, and before that I lived in the United States and Australia, but I'm a Laotian, and I missed my country," he said. "So three years ago I returned, and now I have this restaurant, an export business, and a computer center. I also started a night club called Feeling Well—I had to argue with the government for three months to get that name approved. I started Somchan's, which is named after my wife, because foreigners who came to Vientiane would ask for Laotian food, and there were no Laotian restaurants. I set this up for foreigners." The menu at Somchan's attracts foreign visitors with such specialties as "grilled small intestine," "underdone grilled," and "very spicy delicious bowel salad."

Few of the stories of newfound prosperity are more dramatic than that of Domon Bilavarn. A colonel in the Royal Lao Army, whose family owned the Vieng Vilay Hotel, in Vientiane, he had gone to the United States in 1960 for a training stint with the American armed forces. When the Pathet Lao took over, they confiscated the hotel and sent him to a reëducation camp, where he was assigned to bridge and road construction and was cut off from any contact with his family. In 1988, his camp was closed down. The government gave Domon back the Vieng Vilay, and the Laotian tourism agency actually invested money in it in return for a share of the ownership. With a second partner, a Thai hotel owner, Domon had enough capital to begin major renovations. When I interviewed him, crews of workers had already gutted the hotel, a brick structure in the central commercial district. "We're going to make this a first-class hotel—forty-two rooms," he told me. "There has been no problem with the government about anything. Whatever I need to import, it's O.K. Now I have my hotel and my home back, and my life in Laos is very good." Domon, the forced laborer turned capitalist, would admit to only one difficulty: the spate of building was creating a shortage of skilled workers. "It's a real problem," he complained. "There are no people with construction experience."

THE history of Laos offers some insight into why the Pathet Lao leaders were willing to cast aside traditional Communist economic doctrines. For centuries, tiny, landlocked Laos has been a pawn in the hands of far more powerful countries, which coveted it for its strategic location, bordering China on the north, Vietnam on the east, Thailand and Burma on the west, and Cambodia on the south. As a result, Laos, which itself has never launched a war, has known hardly a moment of peace over the years. Although it has historically been a battleground between the Siamese and the Vietnamese kingdoms, it was also conquered by France in the eighteen-eighties and by Japan in the Second World War, and then underwent the final, climactic struggle with the forces of the United States and Thailand on one side and the Vietnamese and their subservient allies the Pathet Lao on the other. Modern-day Laos is a French creation, not a Laotian one; the French colonialists, who brought in Vietnamese to run the country, set the borders of Laos in consultation with neighboring powers, allowing the Laotians themselves no say. The result is a nation of at least sixty-eight ethnic groups, many of them traditionally at odds with the lowland Lao, who live on the Mekong plains and make up about half the population. The Hmong, one of the sixty-seven other groups, were ready recruits for the C.I.A.'s secret army; young men who had never seen a car or an electric light were plucked from primitive villages and put into jet fighters and helicopter gunships. When the Pathet Lao took over, Vang Pao, the leader of the Hmong, fled to Thailand—with his six wives and twenty-nine children, according to an extensive report on him in the Fresno *Bee* in July of 1989. Tens of thousands of other Hmong also left, and today there are more than a hundred thousand in the United States—many of them living near Fresno, in California's Central Valley.

Although Laos became the forgotten country of Indo-China in 1975, it played a central role in the region starting in the nineteen-fifties, with the

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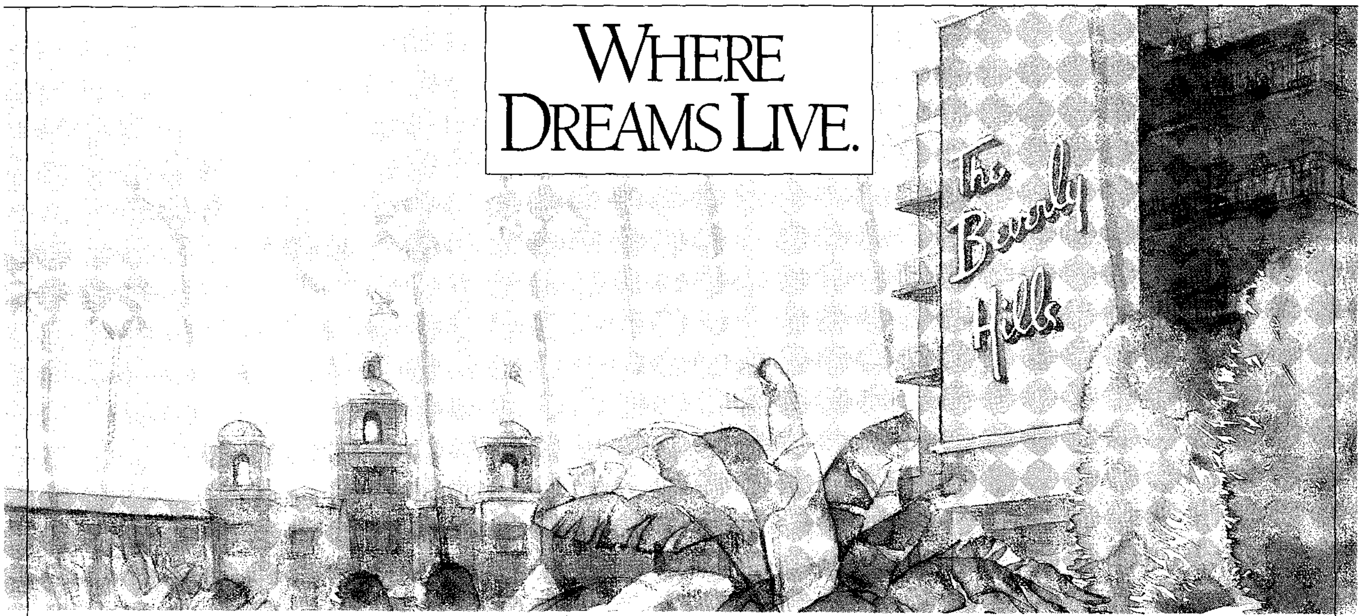

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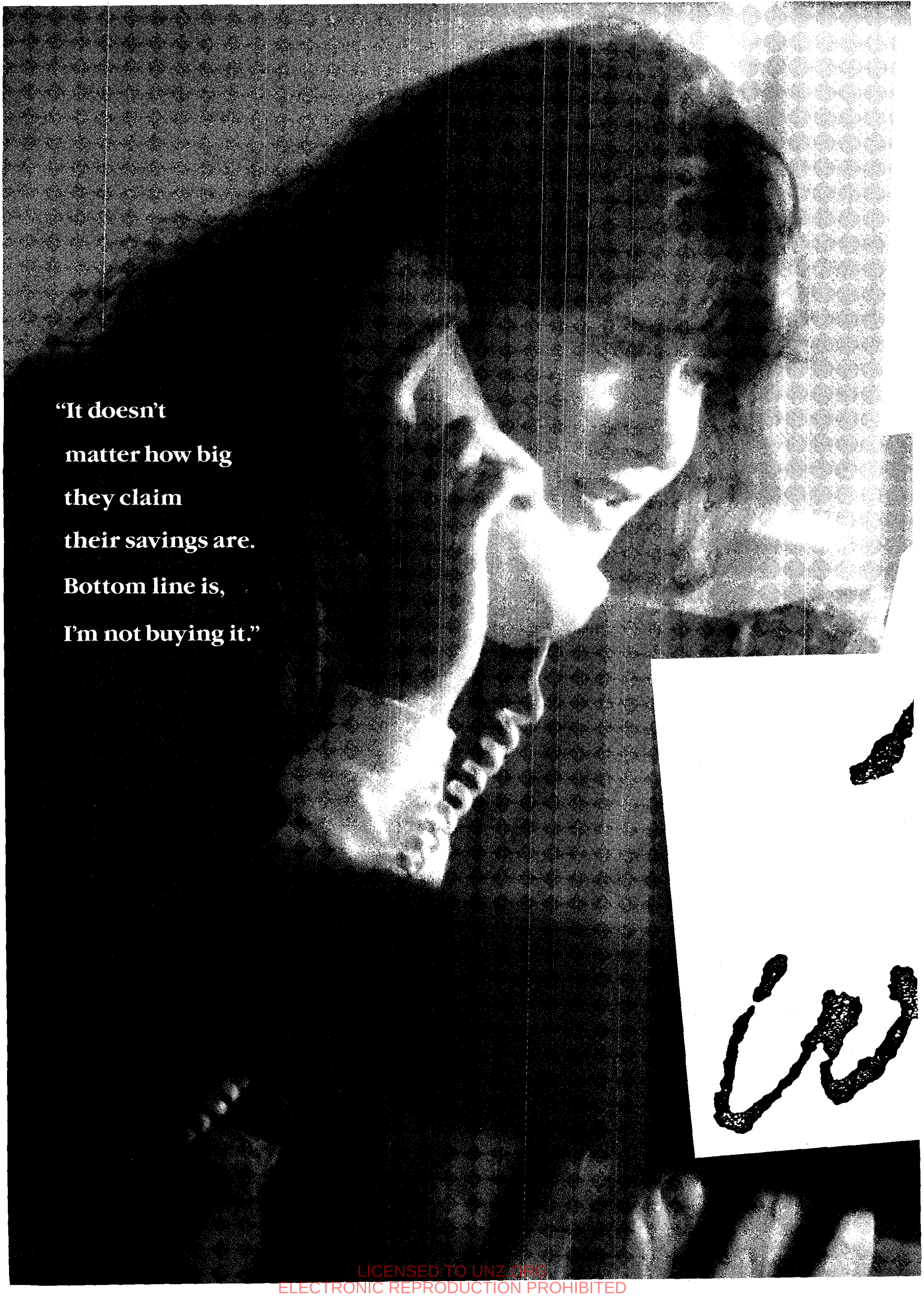
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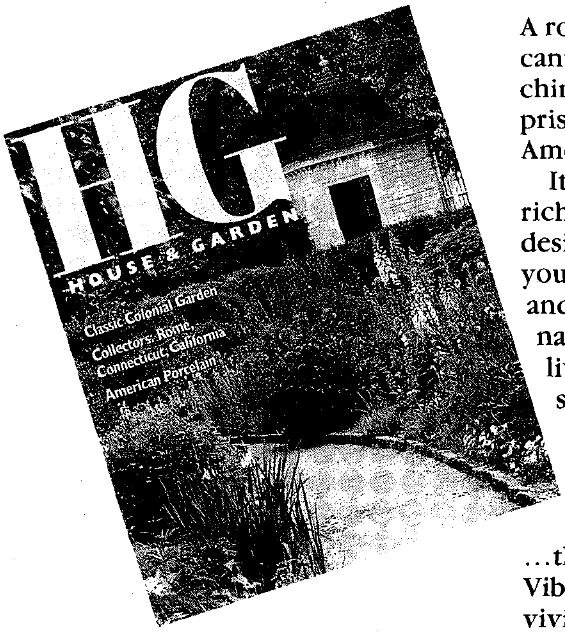

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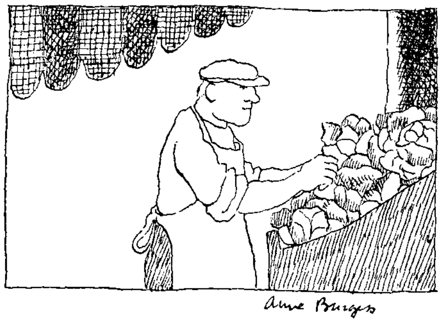
increasing aggressiveness of the Vietnamese Communists—the Vietminh—and their Laotian counterparts, the Pathet Lao. In 1953, when the Vietminh established a stronghold in northeastern Laos, the French decided to protect the approaches to Luang Prabang by occupying Dien Bien Phu, a strategic Vietnamese outpost on the Laotian border. That decision cost the French the Indo-China War. In 1960, President Dwight Eisenhower called Laos the key to Southeast Asia. It was Laos, not South Vietnam, that played the role of the crucial domino: if the Vietminh took over Laos, the reasoning went, they could launch an invasion of their historic enemy Thailand. The Vietminh left nothing to chance in their relationship with the Pathet Lao, since the Laotians, the most tractable of the civilizations of Southeast Asia, possessed a legendary ability to be somewhere else when the bullets were flying. The American press frequently mocked the performance of the Royal Lao Army during the Vietnam War. One American military officer was quoted at the time as calling it "without a doubt the worst army I have ever seen—it makes the South Vietnamese Army look like Storm Troopers." Nor was the Lao Air Force about to waste the potential of its American-supplied planes by confining their activity to bombing runs; more typically, the Laotians used the aircraft to ferry passengers for money or to smuggle opium. They would bomb miles away from the target if they even suspected the presence of anti-aircraft guns, Robbins noted in "The Ravens." Sometimes they wouldn't show up at all, if they thought the day would be unlucky. And, according to Robbins, "The Lao preferred to use the most expensive ordnance, ordering CBU-25 canister bombs as often as possible. . . . The Lao pilots brought the empty canisters back to sell the aluminum, having already snipped off the umbilical cords to sell the wire."

The Pathet Lao were different, because of their subordination to the Vietminh. Joseph J. Zasloff, a professor of political science at the University of Pittsburgh, who is one of the few American specialists on Laos, told me that "in Vietnamese eyes the Pathet Lao weren't all that impressive." He went on, "When I wrote a book on the Pathet Lao, I interviewed a Vietnamese adviser to them, and he sounded like an American military officer describing the South Vietnamese. The Vietminh were crucial to the development of the Pathet Lao. They recruited the leaders, they trained them, they had advisers there, and during the Vietnam War they had their own troops fighting in Laos." Of the three top Pathet Lao leaders, two had Vietnamese wives. The third, Kaysone Phomvihane, who has headed the Laotian Communist Party since its formation, in 1955, is himself half Vietnamese. The son of a Vietnamese civil servant in Savannakhet, he attended a lycée and law school in Hanoi. In 1975, he became the Prime Minister of the newly formed Lao People's Democratic Republic. Now sixty-nine years old, he still rules Laos.

The secretive Kaysone, who lived in a cave in Sam Neua Province, near the Vietnamese border, during the years of the American bombing, is a figure largely unknown to the rest of the world. In the nineteen-sixties, the American press, which in those days covered Laos thoroughly, hardly acknowledged Kaysone. Instead, the press depicted an epic struggle between two half brothers. On one side—sometimes backed by the Americans and at other times the object of C.I.A. plots—was Prince Souvanna Phouma, the neutralist, always willing to seek a compromise. His political adversary—even though they remained personally fond of each other—was Prince Souphanouvong, the so-called Red Prince. French-educated, cultured, and autocratic, these two members of the Lao Royal Family went their separate ways politically in 1949, when Souphanouvong cast his lot with the Vietminh. He had become radicalized by his contacts with French Communists during a year he worked on the docks at Le Havre, and in 1945, when he was a thirty-three-year-old highway engineer in Vietnam, he first met Ho Chi Minh. "My father lived entirely from his salary as an engineer," the Prince's son, Khamsai Souphanouvong, who is a high Laotian official, told me. "He had no land, no house. No one thought who was the prince, who was the worker—they were all Communists." Souphanouvong was named Prime Minister of the resistance government in 1950; with the Pathet Lao takeover, he became the President of Laos. He gave up that job only three years ago, because of a stroke, and today he lives quietly in Vientiane.

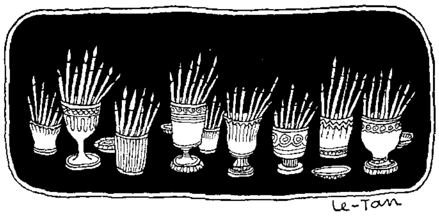


While Souphanouvong maintained ideological "purity," Souvanna Phouma presided as Prime Minister over a series of coalition governments that spanned twenty-four years, from 1951 to 1975; he tried desperately—in the face of plots, counterplots, and coups, some of them aided by the C.I.A.—to steer Laos on a neutral course that would satisfy all sides. An elegant man who spoke fluent French and was a lover of French wines and big cigars, Souvanna willingly suffered many indignities in his effort to save his country. Leonard Unger, who was the American Ambassador to Laos in the early nineteen-sixties, recently told me of one such instance. In 1963, when Unger was in Saigon meeting with Secretary of State Dean Rusk, he received a middle-of-the-night phone call from his deputy telling him that an attempted coup against Souvanna was in progress, led by a right-wing general. Unger returned to Vientiane immediately. "I found out Souvanna was at home, but he was essentially a prisoner, because his whole compound was ringed by the dissidents," he said. "I had to get to him and tell him all was not lost, that the United States was supporting him. So I drove down a driveway parallel to his compound, walked to the fence, and leaned over. He came out on his balcony, and he could hear what I said if I shouted. Reporters were all around listening, I was shouting, and he was on the balcony shouting back. The French Ambassador was there, and he immediately dubbed it *la diplomatie à la 'Romeo et Juliette.'* " Souvanna was a genuine patriot hopelessly squeezed on one side by the rigidly anti-Communist Americans and the rightist factions in the Lao Army and, on the other side, by the militant Pathet Lao and Vietminh, who would agree to compromises and then brazenly disregard them in their effort to gain control of Laos. "Neutrality was not a fashionable idea at that time," Souvanna's son Prince Panya Souvanna Phouma told me in an interview that took place in Bangkok, where he works as a business consultant. "The problem was that nobody cared about Laos. We are at the crossroads of several frontiers, and everyone thought that Laos could be of use. The Americans acted as if they were blind. There was no relation between the problems of Laos and the reaction of the Americans."

While political machinations embroiled Vientiane, and American bombing devastated the countryside, the Pathet Lao leaders waited patiently in the caves of Sam Neua Province until an opportune time to move. In the summer of 1975, sensing that the Pathet Lao would soon gain control of the whole of Laos, the British Ambassador, Alan Davidson, flew to Sam Neua to witness an entire shadow government functioning in a network of caves. "I was the first non-Communist to be received there," he told me, in a telephone interview from London. "I hoped very much to see Kaysone and some of the other leaders we hadn't met, but that was not to happen. They had a sort of hotel cave, and then we visited a hospital cave and a theatre cave, where I was compelled to dance with a Pathet Lao danseuse. Souphanouvong's cave was very elegantly furnished, with a carpet, a bookcase, and the sort of sofa and armchair regarded as chic in that part of the world. The hotel cave, however, was distinctly Spartan, with a naked light bulb and only cold water from an outdoor tap. There was a 10 P.M. curfew, and at nine-fifty-six the Pathet Lao Foreign Minister told us we had four minutes to brush our teeth before the light went out. It was a little bit crazy and surreal."

By 1975, Laos was a ravaged country. For many years, education, medical care, roads, and communications had been largely ignored while Vientiane subsisted on an inflated wartime economy, and that economy collapsed with the end of the Vietnam conflict. Entire provinces lay in ruins from the American bombing. After years of venality, corruption, and political infighting manipulated by foreign powers, Laotians of many political stripes welcomed the Pathet Lao takeover. This bloodless coup demonstrated for the first time that the Pathet Lao, despite their close ties to Vietnam, were capable of imposing uniquely Laotian solutions—in this case, a government incorporating the tolerance and the lack of aggressiveness that distinguish the Laotians from their neighbors. What happened was extraordinary: After overthrowing the government of Souvanna Phouma and abolishing the Royal Family, the Pathet Lao didn't execute the Prince and his followers, expel them from the country, or even throw them in jail. Instead, they immediately named Souvanna and the King, Savang Vatthana, advisers. And the United States, the country that had bombed Communist-held areas of Laos for nine years, was invited to maintain its Embassy in Vientiane. This flexibility of the Pathet Lao would be demonstrated again when the time came to change the course of the economy.

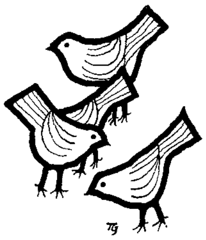
By most accounts, Souvanna's position was not just an empty title, either. In 1977, the *Times* reported that "the 76-year-old former prime minister still lives quietly in his old residence, occasionally attending diplomatic dinners," and went on, "He has decided to stay despite pressure from his family to join them in exile in France. Treated with deference by the government, he has been named a special adviser and attends the monthly cabinet meetings and other important functions." When he died, in 1984, he was given an elaborate state funeral, attended by Kaysone himself, who rarely appears in public. The King was not so fortunate. In 1977, the government, fearing that insurgents from Thailand would attempt to organize a coup built around him, since he was still revered by many Laotians, sent the Royal Family into internal exile in Sam Neua Province. Under the harsh conditions of the mountainous jungles of the northeast, the King and the Queen died. No one knows the details of their deaths, which the government officially acknowledged only last December. When I toured the Royal Palace in Luang Prabang, a Palace guide, who willingly told me all sorts of stories about the King's life, only laughed nervously when I asked about his death. To this day, no details have emerged on the fate of the Crown Prince, Vongsavang.



The Pathet Lao's willingness to impose a homegrown solution didn't extend to two other major problems: what to do with the Army officers and bureaucrats of the old regime, and how to handle an economy that had been destroyed by war. In both areas, the Pathet Lao opted for the precedents set by previous Communist liberation movements. As a result, they inflicted grievous harm on the country, causing many of the economic problems that Laos is struggling to overcome today.

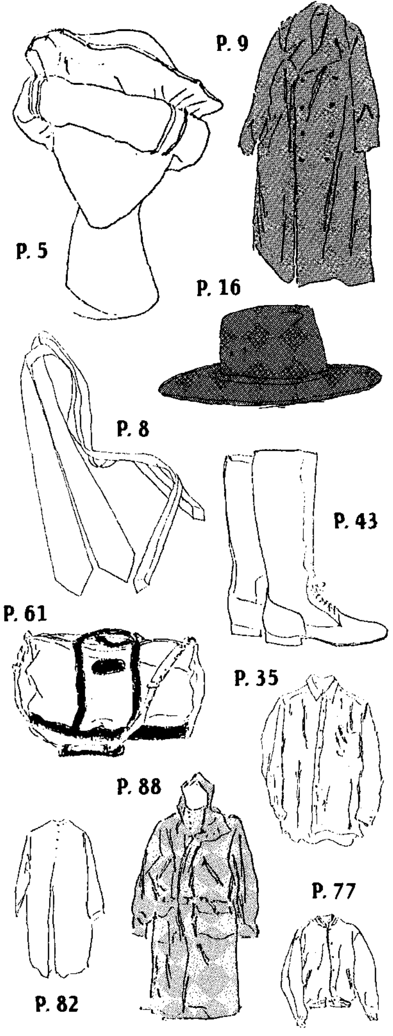
Souphanouvong, the new President, with his French education and his internationalist outlook, could have steered Laos on a more centrist course, which might have brought Western aid. But from the beginning it was clear that Kaysone, the new Prime Minister—he appeared at a reception on December 5, 1975, and that was the first time he had been seen in public since 1958—was to be in charge, with Souphanouvong occupying a figurehead role. To Davidson, the former British Ambassador, the role assigned Souphanouvong seemed logical, since this urbane, Westernized man was so different from the other Vietminh and Pathet Lao leaders, whose outlook had been shaped by years of a harsh existence in the mountains and jungles. "You couldn't really have a Communist country dominated by the princes and the ruling class educated in Paris," Davidson said.

Kaysone and the other Pathet Lao leaders made two grave errors almost immediately. First, they rounded up somewhere between thirty thousand and forty thousand people and put them in reëducation camps; the internees included many civil servants and officers of the Royal Lao Army. This action, combined with a mass exodus of the Laotian élite across the Mekong River to Thailand, stripped Laos of those who were capable of restoring the economy and running the agencies of government. In the United States, I spoke with a man who had been sent to one of these camps; because he is applying for political asylum, he asked that his name not be used. This man, who speaks elegant French, was a colonel in the Royal Lao Army from 1960 to 1975. "The *Pathet Lao* invited the hundred highest-ranking officers to their regional headquarters to watch a film about their goals and to hold a meeting," he told me. "They sent out official invitation cards. But when we got there the Pathet Lao troops surrounded us. They said that they were taking us to the north for a visit to discuss what is happening to the country—that a big group of people would be waiting to welcome us with flowers. They flew us to Sam Neua Province, to a camp on the Vietnamese border. It wasn't fenced in, but it was a mountainous area with a river on one side, and guards blocked the only path to escape. They took our military uniforms and gave us civilian clothes, and we got a new set of clothes once a year. We cut branches to construct shelters, and used banana leaves as beds. There was no medicine; a lot of people died from malaria. Each morning, they rang a bell at five and assigned jobs for the day—to cook rice, cut wood, work in the fields. When the sun went down, we ate dinner, then sat in a circle to talk about the deficiencies of the old government and to engage in self-criticism. There was no physical torture, but a lot of psychological devices, mindless rules just to control you. They let us write letters home, but then they read them to see what we were thinking, and never sent them. I was in the camp for twelve years, until 1987. I was sent to dig a canal, to build a school, and I was hitched to a plow to do the work of a water buffalo."



Faced with the prospect of a reëducation camp, hundreds of thousands of Laotians chose to flee the country. Since 1975, three hundred and forty-three thousand Laotians—roughly a tenth of the population—have registered as refugees in Thailand. The new government was being run not by highly skilled people but by thousands of cadres from areas that the Pathet Lao had controlled. "The Pathet Lao, when they came out of their caves, knew how to conduct guerrilla wars, but they didn't have the slightest idea of how to run a nation," a Western aid official in Vientiane told me. Just as in the French-colonial days, personnel brought in from Vietnam helped to run the Laotian government—only, this time, of course, they were Vietnamese from the opposite end of the ideological spectrum. In addition, more than forty thousand Vietnamese troops were stationed in Laos. The Pathet Lao took over a country bereft of money and resources. The previous government had depended on foreign aid, mostly from the United States, for eighty per cent of its budget; now this aid was cut off, and those fleeing the country were taking with them everything that could be turned into a liquid asset. Facing severe shortages and rampant inflation in a nation with a per-capita income that was then less than ninety dollars a year, the Pathet Lao set about imposing a Stalinist system: they collectivized farms, nationalized the tiny industrial base, and centralized control of prices and all other facets of the economy. The government made it clear that it was regulating every aspect of life. Long-haired youths were told to get a haircut; women were required to wear the traditional long native skirt; everyone was expected to engage in communal rice-and-vegetable growing on evenings and weekends, and children had to be taught in Laotian instead of French. "Laws are being enforced now," the *Times* reported in 1976. "No one locks his car doors anymore. There are even traffic rules, and people are beginning to obey them. If a violator is caught, the vehicle is confiscated."

How did Vientiane, under the same Pathet Lao leadership, switch to unrestrained free enterprise, zooming motorbikes, and jammed discothèques? As anyone finds who asks any question involving Laos, getting a straight answer from government officials is not easy. Even an interview is hard to come by, since in Laos, although it is facing shortages of many commodities, a stifling bureaucracy is in abundant supply. Strict protocol controls every government transaction; when I went to the Ho Chi Minh Trail, for example, I ended up being accompanied not only by my government interpreter and a driver but also by officials of both the administrative and the information sections of Savannakhet Province, and a security guard besides. (In typical Laotian fashion, the security guard was armed with nothing more deadly than a camera. Even in Vientiane, there is almost no evidence of a police or a military presence.) My first interview came only after a week-long process of writing letters and submitting questions, which were sent off to the rele-



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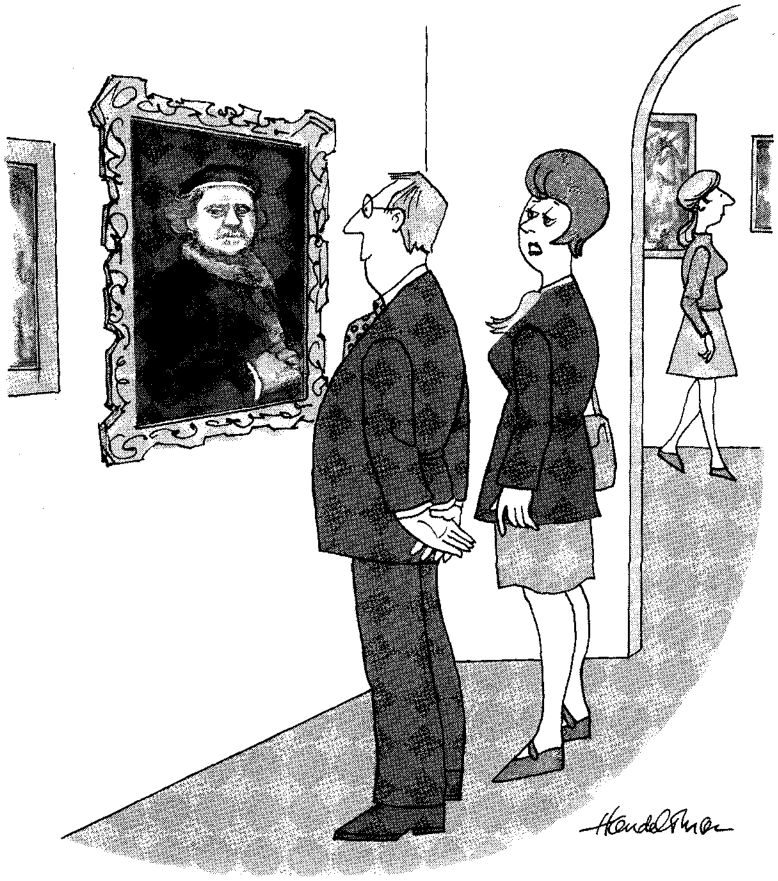
vant ministries and seemed to be mainly disregarded, in the hope that the problem would disappear before anyone had to do anything about it. My interpreter, who handled these negotiations, would shake his head sadly every morning and say about the minister under discussion, "He is a very busy man." At one point, he drew up an impressive appointment chart, showing the time at which each official was to be interviewed. However, none of the ministries had yet responded to the interview requests; the appointment chart represented the interpreter's fantasies about what would happen. I discovered that journalists aren't the only ones to encounter bureaucratic difficulties in seeing government officials. A Soviet diplomat in Vientiane told me, "The Soviet Ambassador has to wait a few days or a week to get an appointment even with a first deputy minister, not just Kaysone. They're all very busy. What they're doing, no one knows, but they're very busy. No one wants to take responsibility. 'Well, of course, we'll think it over—yes.' "

A government official's monthly pay is barely enough for a couple of tanks of gasoline. My interpreter, who had sufficient status to have worked for the Laotian government in New York, India, and Australia, was supporting a wife and two children on twenty dollars a month. A first deputy minister makes about forty dollars, hardly more than a desk clerk in one of the newly privatized hotels, but he does get a government-supplied house and car. Khamsai Souphanouvong, who is the second-ranking official in the Ministry of Economics, Planning, and Finance and is a possible successor to Kaysone, told me, "Workers in a factory now get a higher salary than mine, and I am responsible for finance all over the country. I buy things from the market and cook them myself, and go to restaurants only for official business. But during our period of fighting in the jungle no one got a salary. Some years, we didn't even have salt. We had to sacrifice ourselves for our country." Some government officials supplement their income by holding a second job—often during government hours—or by growing vegetables in their back yards and raising chickens and pigs. A Western diplomat told me he once saw a high Laotian official selling quail eggs in the market before going on to his office. For those whose idealism may have faded, extra income from corruption may be readily available in the newly open economy. In Bangkok, I met a Thai businessman whose company sells to Vietnam and Cambodia but refuses to do business in Laos. "I gave a Laotian official a bribe of ten thousand baht"—four hundred dollars—"and he kept the money but never came through with the deal," he complained. "For Vietnam and Cambodia, we have to pay people in the government, too, but at least they deliver for us."

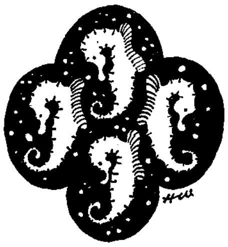
The low salaries are matched by dismal working conditions. Government buildings are dank and filthy, because there are no maintenance staffs; employees are supposed to clean their own offices on Saturday mornings. Few dignitaries have receptionists or secretaries, and even my Foreign Ministry interpreter had trouble finding the offices of people I was supposed to interview. When we did corral the proper official, the interview sometimes turned into a lecture, which I wasn't permitted to interrupt. Kham Ouane Boupha, Vice-Minister of Agriculture and Forests, took forty-two minutes to answer my first question. A stern-looking man wearing wire-rimmed glasses, who brought his own interpreter and ignored mine, he watched me closely during the translation. If I looked up even for a moment, he pointed to my notepad and made a writing motion with his thumb and forefinger. These interviews, since I was asking many questions about the revitalized economy, included lots of statistics, and the statistics confirmed a warning I had had from Western diplomats—not to trust any figures I heard, since statistics in Laos were notoriously unreliable. One high economic official told me that foreign investment in Laos had totalled a hundred million dollars so far; a second official, of similar rank, put it at seventy million dollars; and a Western embassy that had just completed a study of the Laotian economy claimed that the most accurate figure was five million. In Savannakhet, a bustling city that sprawls for several miles, a local official insisted that the population was just twenty thousand; Westerners in Vientiane said that it was actually seventy thousand.

Yet the interviews did help to explain how the Laotian version of *perestroika* came about. In different ways, several of the government officials' explanations had a common theme: Over the centuries, as the Laotians fell victim to one foreign power after another, they survived by turning inward—by developing a strong sense of nation-



"Do you really like Rembrandt, or do you simply identify with him as a white heterosexual male?"

al identity intertwined with their Buddhist beliefs. What evolved was a Laotian way of doing things. But two Pathet Lao moves—the Stalinist economy and the reëducation camps—were taken wholesale from the Vietnamese, and it eventually became clear that neither was working. So the Pathet Lao leaders, behind their image as a rigid dictatorship, had to exercise great flexibility. What happened was best explained to me by Somphavan Inthavong, a key economic planner, who is one of the most articulate of the Laotian leaders. "To survive, we must have a very Asian philosophy," he said. "We must be like the trees that curve with the strong winds. We changed when history bent us to the point where if we didn't change we would break. We had made many errors in the first ten years of the new regime, because we had little experience and wanted to copy the big countries. But we do better when we go our own way. To copy means to refuse to see that you are in a different stage of development. We are a country the size of West Germany with just seven per cent of its population. We can potentially grow crops on four million hectares of land, but now only four hundred thousand are under cultivation. Last year, our rice production exactly met our needs, but we couldn't distribute it evenly. Where are the roads? It's cheaper to buy rice from Thailand than to bring it up from the south of Laos. So our change has been motivated mostly by our internal needs. But it should not be denied that, in addition to the internal reasons, Laos has been shaped by economic and political influences from the outside world. Every day in Laos, you can tune in Thai television and watch CNN in color." To emphasize the degree of the government's flexibility today, Somphavan said, "The man who came to see me just before you was one of the leaders of the rightists in the old regime, a vice-prime minister. All countries must change. We have a different way, a Laotian way, of doing things."



As is true of every major decision in Laos, the central figure in bringing about the economic changes was Kaysone. "He's very busy, because he's the only man who makes the decisions on all vital questions," the Soviet diplomat in Vientiane told me. (While many of the diplomats in Vientiane readily agreed to interviews, all asked that their names not be used.) "That's not very good, and that's why Laos lags behind in many ways. Kaysone can't get people to do things. This is one of the main problems here: the old generation is still in power." Kaysone, a distinguished-looking man with a round, fleshy face and graying hair receding at the temples, lives in the same clandestine manner he developed in the caves of Sam Neua. Until he visited Japan and France last year, he had never travelled outside the Soviet bloc except for two visits to Thailand. He almost never grants interviews, and my repeated requests to see him were rebuffed with the usual explanation: "He is a very busy man." Although Kaysone has never been to the United States, his house is a little slice of Americana. Along with many other Pathet Lao leaders, he lives in Kilometre 6, an American-style suburb on the edge of Vientiane, complete with ranch-type houses built by the United States during the Vietnam War. (The kilometre counting starts at the Presidential Palace, on the Mekong River.) Kilometre 6 can be reached by a half-mile-long road from the main highway. Since I saw no guards around, I asked my cabdriver to let me off on the highway, telling him I would walk in as far as I could get. Although he had previously been fearless in taking me around Vientiane, this time he refused even to slow down, saying that he would be arrested if he did.

By several accounts, Kaysone possesses a keen mind. "I've met him many, many times," the Soviet diplomat said. "He's a very clever man. One of his advantages is that he likes to learn from everybody. He acknowledges his mistakes, and he knows what should be done to build his country." Kaysone seems capable of expounding on all sorts of subjects. Last fall, he addressed a conference of Laotian bankers and spoke for the entire day, with only a break for lunch. He described in detail the backward state of the country's economy, and noted that when there was capital available it was usually either wasted or used for immediate needs, not for long-term projects. "Shortages exist in rice, foodstuffs, fer-

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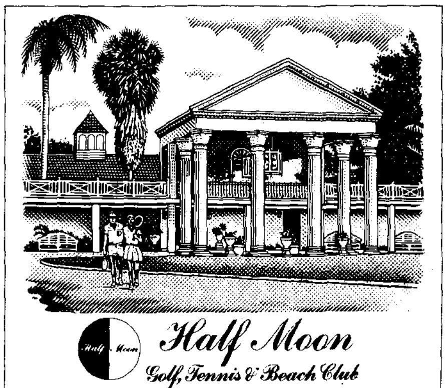

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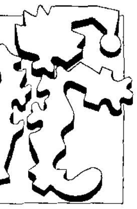

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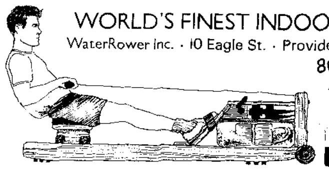

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tilizer, farm tools, and other staple items," he told the bankers. "But the market is inundated with whiskey, beer, cigarettes, and other types of expensive goods imported from foreign countries."

The nearest he came to discussing the economic reforms publicly was in a February, 1989, interview with Grant Evans, an Australian sociologist who is an expert on Laos. Evans asked him, "Why did you have the old policy?"

"Well, they had done it that way in other socialist countries, and I thought I understood how it should be done," Kaysone replied. "So we tried it out here. It worked in some situations but not in others. Then [in 1979] we had to slow down, and then change direction." He noted that "the real change began in 1985," and said, "It was then that we really began to tackle the problems of prices, values, and money. We began experiments with a more flexible pricing policy. . . . If we are not good at controlling the macroeconomic relations between goods and money, we'll have the same problems as China."

To an outsider's eye, the economic reforms might look like unbridled capitalism. But Laotian officials patiently explained—one of them while sitting beneath a map of Laos that had a picture of Engels taped to it—that sound socialist principles were lurking underneath. The teachings of Lenin, they said, give the free market a vital role in the transition to socialism—you have to pass through a capitalist stage on the way to true socialism, and Laos had never done this.

"Is it the goal of Laos to be a socialist state?" I asked Boun Omme Southichak, one of the officials who oversee foreign investments.

"Sure, but we need some time," he replied. "We have to go step by step. We don't know how far away socialism is; it depends." The unwillingness of the government to abandon its ideological baggage makes for schizophrenic scenes these days in Vientiane. The biggest bookstore sells nothing but publications from Communist countries, but a couple of blocks away you can buy a television and watch four channels from Thailand. (The Thai and Laotian languages are so similar that people who speak one can easily understand the other.) While Laos's television station still serves as a propaganda mouthpiece for the government, its salesmen are pounding the streets trying to persuade businessmen to buy commercial time. Students still have to pass an exam in Marxism to graduate from a university, and one student told me that—at the same time that the government was leasing state-owned factories to capitalists—his Marxism teacher was lecturing on how factories under capitalism exploited their workers.

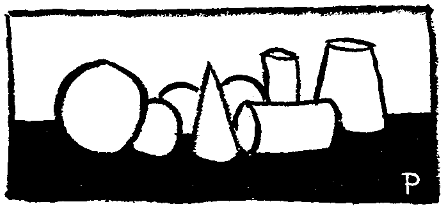
I asked the student whether he had pointed out the contradiction.

"You don't ask questions," he replied. "You just take down what the teacher says."

IT seems axiomatic that changing the economic system of an impoverished country in a way that frees some of the people to get wealthy while the vast majority remain very poor must create resentment—particularly if the economic freedom is not accompanied by fundamental political reforms. I assumed, therefore, that it would be easy to find Laotians critical of their government, at least in private conversation. But I found none at all. One Western ambassador told me he had never met a dissident, and explained, "The young Laotian would say, 'We have freedom to travel, we have discos, we have economic reform.' I don't see any sign at all of political pressure for change; I can't imagine where it would come from." Another diplomat noted, "The Voice of America broadcasts an hour a night, and it's very well listened to. They get Thai television and radio. So the seeds have been planted. But there's no indication that anything is sprouting."

Nor could the Soviet Embassy provide any leads when I asked a diplomat there whether there was a Laotian equivalent of Boris Yeltsin, the Soviet Union's most severe critic of Gorbachev. "Laos is a different country, Oriental in thinking," he said. "People are very passive politically here. Their thinking is that if they have rice that's good, but they don't necessarily want to have more rice. Inevitably, there will be dissent, but probably not for several years more."

I spoke to a couple of Laotian journalists, and discovered that they, too, adhered firmly to the government line. The press isn't needed to expose any shortcomings of government, a Vientiane reporter told me. "The government has meetings every day, and they talk about all these problems," he said. "Laos won't be like Eastern Europe, because people follow Buddhism, which tells you to stay together in peace."



Finally, I took to stopping people on the streets who looked like students of college age, and inviting them to practice English with me. That invitation is certain to get a response, because among the young people of Laos English has replaced French as the second language. One day, I was lucky, and encountered a group of about twenty students who were eager to talk. But when I turned the conversation to politics my audience shrank to one. A dissident by no stretch of the imagination, this student was at least willing to answer my questions frankly. "All the students know what has happened in Eastern Europe," he said. "We found out about it by watching CNN on Thai television. We all know what happened in China, too, but what could we do? Here everyone is too busy running around making money. This is not like Eastern Europe, where there are so many demonstrators. In Laos, if there had been any sort of demonstration the police would have outnumbered the critics."

The absence of dissent can't be explained solely by the presence of neighborhood block wardens, who keep an eye on comings and goings, for in the past few years the trappings of a police state have been substantially reduced. Five years ago, Westerners living in Vientiane couldn't invite a Laotian to their house without first clearing the invitation in writing with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Today, that procedure has been eased, and Westerners and Laotians can be seen dancing together in discothèques. (In the early days of the discos, the government decreed that dancers had to stay two feet apart, but that regulation is no longer enforced.) Anyone, even a former internee in a reëducation camp, can get a passport; for that matter, you can now visit Thailand for a day without a passport. A passport costs fifty-five cents and takes a couple of months to receive, but the process can be speeded up if you pay extra. All former Laotian citizens can come back to visit, whatever their politics. In 1975, for instance, Prince Panya Souvanna Phouma discovered that he was about to be put in a reëducation camp, presumably because he was working at the Ministry of Finance. (Souvanna Phouma's three other children, who weren't government officials, had no such problem.) Panya escaped across the Mekong to Thailand, and this February he returned for the first time. "I was received very nicely," he told me. All over Laos, I met visitors who fled in 1975 and had returned to check on things. By most estimates, the number of former Laotian citizens returning now exceeds the number of those fleeing across the Mekong.

The Laotian government claims that it has closed all the reëducation camps. That claim is impossible to verify, but it is known that the population of political prisoners has dropped dramatically from the 1975 figure, which was more than ten thousand. The State Department says, in its 1989 Human Rights Report, that it knows definitely of only thirty-four people who have been incarcerated since 1975, and that the total number of political detainees in the country is somewhere between that figure and "over one thousand." The report concludes, "Many former camp prisoners apparently have been able to obtain work. Some of them now have responsible, professional positions both with the government of Laos and with international organizations present in Vientiane."

Although the better treatment of political opponents hasn't led to toleration of any sort of opposition party, there has been some loosening of restraints. Until two years ago, the Laotian Communist Party made all government appointments—the Minister of Health, for example, would have no say in who his deputies were to be—but this control is now less strict. Moreover, in parliamentary elections last year—the first since the Pathet Lao took over—a hundred and twenty-one candidates were allowed to run for seventy-nine seats, and fourteen of the winners weren't Party members. The parliament, called the Supreme People's Assembly, is being given some real power, for the first time, and it is now drafting the regime's first constitution. (Since 1975, Laos has been without a constitution and without a code of civil law, and their absence is considered one impediment to attracting foreign investment.) Western diplomats in Vientiane, however, don't view the parliamentary elections as a precursor of major political changes. "The elections were something of a farce, since all candidates were approved by the state in advance," one ambassador said. "The political system has not changed at all; Laos is a tightly run one-party socialist state, and is likely to remain that way." Government officials are quick to dampen any speculation that political change might be coming. Souban, the Deputy Foreign Minister, told me, "It's not like Eastern Europe here, because we have a just economic policy and we've liberalized our thinking. Because our economic policy is correct, there are no demonstrations. There couldn't be demonstrations in the future. . . . The non-Party members in parliament share the policies of the Party. All the people in Laos agree with the government."

Many Laotians do indeed seem genuinely to admire their government. The opening up of the economy, after so many years of total deprivation, has led to something approaching a state of euphoria. Everyone in Vientiane seems proud of the abundance of material goods now available, even if most residents can't afford to do more than window-shop for them. But there is a second, and more important, explanation for the absence of dissent, and that lies in the availability of the Mekong River as a safety valve. Dissidents can simply cross the river to Thailand. There are no patrol boats on either side to stop anyone wanting to leave Laos, and those Laotians who cross can melt easily into the population of northeast Thailand, which consists largely of Thais whose ethnic origin is lowland Lao. Many Laotians are able to join relatives or friends; my interpreter, for instance, told me that all three of his brothers live in Thailand. This is the crucial difference that has allowed economic reform to succeed in Laos unaccompanied by political changes, while the same attempt failed so dramatically in China. Almost no one in Beijing could even dream of escaping to the West, but in Vientiane it's as easy as taking a boat across the river. Those

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Laotians who haven't done so are here because, for one reason or another, they have chosen to stay.

The Mekong has lately proved to be a two-way street, for a few of those who fled have been returning, with arms, to harass the Laotian government. The insurgents include Hmong and lowland Lao from refugee camps in Thailand, and also assorted bandits and opium smugglers. Each winter during the dry season, they move into Laotian villages from across the border and ambush trucks, particularly on Route 13, massacring the passengers, including women and children. This past winter, the attacks were especially brutal; in late December, newcomers burned down an uncoöperative Hmong village and ambushed a six-truck convoy on Route 13, killing twenty-eight civilians. It's likely that the attackers include at least a few Laotians who have become American citizens; the Hmong leader, Vang Pao, who is a naturalized American, is widely believed to be one of those involved. The possibility that Americans might once again be fighting in Laos does not please the United States government, which views the fighters as little more than drug smugglers. The State Department says that the United States is not supporting them directly or indirectly.

Even those knowledgeable about the insurgents differ in their estimates of the number of rebels, which range from two hundred to thirteen thousand. Although the insurgency poses no threat to the stability of the Laotian government, the Pathet Lao fear that the sniper attacks could imperil the badly needed foreign-aid projects now in progress in the countryside. That happened in the summer of 1981, when a World Bank consultant studying a possible road-building project died in a bazooka attack north of Savannakhet. The perpetrators were never discovered, but the World Bank dropped all consideration of road projects for the next five years. The attacks on Route 13 are probably one reason that last fall, after opening Laos for several months to anyone who applied for entry, the government stopped issuing visas to individual tourists. Some of the less prosperous new tourists, it turned out, were putting themselves in danger by trying to hitchhike to Luang Prabang instead of taking the plane.

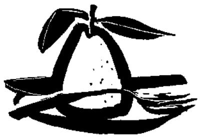
In January, the government may have struck back vigorously at the insurgents. According to an article in the Bangkok *Post*, insurgent leaders accused the government of bombing ten villages where their forces had established a foothold; they claimed that a hundred and eighty-three people were killed and five thousand were left homeless. The article noted, "Thai-Lao border intelligence sources said the reports could be genuine." The article raised the question of whether the Laotians were fighting against a guerrilla movement with the same tactics that the Americans had used during the Vietnam War—in effect, destroying villages in order to save them. No foreign embassy in Vientiane has direct evidence of any bombing of villages, although diplomats say they are certain that some sort of bombing—perhaps of rebel camps—did take place. When I put the question to Souban, he dismissed it with a wave of his hand. "They don't threaten our security at all," he said. "Do you think we need MIG-21s to bomb five or six people in the mountains?"

The insurgents, who call themselves the United Laotian National Liberation Front, last winter declared that they had established a provisional revolutionary government, operating on Laotian soil. A probable explanation for all this activity is that the rebels fear they are about to lose their traditional sanctuary in Thailand, because Thailand is finding participation in Laos's newly open economy a far more profitable enterprise than covert support of an anti-Communist insurgency. The turnaround in relations between the two historic enemies (Thai "volunteers" had fought in the C.I.A.'s secret army, and American planes bombing Laos had taken off from Thai territory) has been dramatic. From December of 1987 to February of 1988, Thailand and Laos fought a bloody border war over disputed territory, which cost a hundred Lao and five hundred Thai lives. In February of 1989, just a year after that conflict ended, Kaysone was in Thailand grandly declaiming to his hosts, "Mountains may collapse and rivers may run dry, but let the Laotian-Thai friendship last forever." The newfound relationship makes considerable sense, since the two cultures are so similar and since, by Laotian standards, Thailand is an enormously wealthy superpower and a potential source of desperately needed investment capital. "Once the barriers are down, there's a natural affinity with Thailand," Joseph Zasloff, the University of Pittsburgh Laos specialist, said. "And there's also a new mood in Thailand, characterized by the Prime Minister's slogan 'From battlefield to marketplace.' "

Indeed, Thai investors—and also Thai government officials and high-ranking Army officers, who, characteristically, don't let their official duties interfere with the opportunity to make personal profits—have been courting Laos assiduously, and Thai companies have provided a large share of the new investment in Laos. The well-stocked markets of Vientiane that give the city such an aura of prosperity are selling mainly Thai consumer goods, from food and medicine to television sets. "The Laotian economy is becoming dependent on Thailand," a Western ambassador told me. "I think the government is more comfortable being an economic province of Thailand than being so closely tied to Vietnam. The Laotians have nothing at all in common with the Vietnamese except political ideology. Now Australia has agreed to build a bridge across the Mekong, and it will be finished in 1994. That will make it much easier for the Thais to rape and devastate Laos." That ambassador isn't the only one to use harsh words in describing the relationship; the Laotians themselves sometimes seem to be having second thoughts about it. On July 4, 1989, the state-owned Radio Vientiane broadcast a speech accusing Thailand of using economic power to dominate Laos, because armed force had not succeeded. "Having failed to destroy our country through military might, the enemy has now employed a new strategy, attacking us through the so-called attempt to turn the Indo-Chinese battlefield into a marketplace," the speaker said. The Laotian government quickly attempted to calm the ensuing uproar with the lame explanation that the speech—in a country where all the media are rigidly controlled—didn't reflect official views.

The trade problem is particularly acute in respect to timber. In early 1989, Thailand banned logging in its few remaining forests, and has since been covetously eying the timber resources of its neighbors. This puts its policies in sharp conflict with those of Laos, which has shown a sensitivity to environmental concerns which is unusual in either Third World or Communist nations. For several years now, as one example, some of the ethnic minorities in mountainous areas who have been destroying the forests through slash-and-burn agriculture have been offered material inducements by the government to relocate in the lowlands. "In most countries, it starts at the bottom," Richard Salter, a Canadian forestry consultant working in Laos, said recently of environmental awareness. "People get concerned and go after the politicians. But here the interest is at the very top. When Thailand banned logging, the Thais were literally over here the next day. They said, 'We'll pay anything,' and they were refused. The government seems willing to lose short-term economic benefits for long-term environmental considerations. That's very unusual."

Although Laos has banned the export of unprocessed logs since early in 1989, disregarding the Thai appetite for timber is not as easy as putting a regulation on the books. For the Laotian Army, for corrupt provincial officials, and for many peasants, timber represents hard cash in an extremely poor country. Some observers think that logging continues at the same level as before—only, now, illegally, so that the central government is deprived of the revenues. In the course of my drive to the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and on a day trip north from Vientiane, I saw logs all along the road. Those who know Laos well say that the problem is most acute in Xaignabouli Province—the one province of Laos that is on the west side of the Mekong River and so has no water boundary with Thailand. Xaignabouli is controlled largely by the Laotian military, and, according to some accounts, huge areas are being clear-cut, with both Laotian and Thai military officers pocketing the proceeds. I asked Somphavan Inthavong, the influential economic planner, about this, and he was more candid than other government officials, who simply deny that the problem exists. "There are good Thais and bad Thais," he said. "We cannot just by a decree make those who are bad go away. Guards alone in the forest can't do the job, so we have to rely on the villages. We're giving villagers the title to surrounding forests, telling them they can use the timber for their own purposes, like housing and charcoal. That way, they will protect it."



At the same time that Thailand has strengthened its ties with Laos, Vietnam appears to have willingly backed off from its position of strong influence over the Pathet Lao government. For many years, the Vietnamese kept between forty and fifty thousand troops stationed in Laos. Soviet and American diplomats agree that all these troops are now gone, with most of the withdrawals having taken place in 1987 and 1988. It's possible that some military advisers still remain, but diplomats think that, if so, the advisers are now more involved with construction projects than with directing the Laotian military. Why the change? One reason is the easing of tensions in Southeast Asia, including the improved relations between Vietnam and its two traditional enemies China and Thailand. The reduced threat from both makes Laos less strategically important to Vietnam. A second explanation lies in Vietnam's own economic problems, which make it less feasible to support thousands of troops in Laos. "They're good fighters and they waged war for many years," a Soviet diplomat explains. "But now they're tired of it. They need many things; they have a lot of problems."

Thailand isn't the only country to look more favorably on Laos today. Relations with China are reported to have improved as a result of Kaysone's visit to Beijing, in late 1989. Laotian officials seem confident that, over all, foreign aid will rise in the future, with grants from the West more than compensating for any cutbacks from Eastern Europe. This is a key concern, because, by anyone's accounting in this land of muddled statistics, foreign aid is what keeps Laos functioning. Khamsai Souphanouvong says that in 1989 Laos received a total of two hundred million dollars in grants and loans from foreign countries and international agencies, and that almost three-quarters of the aid came from the Com-

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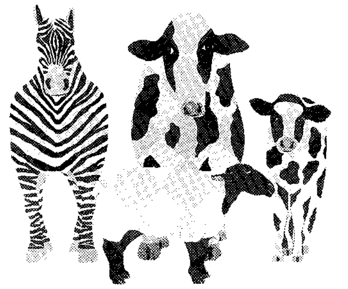

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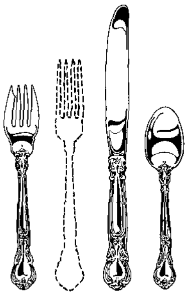

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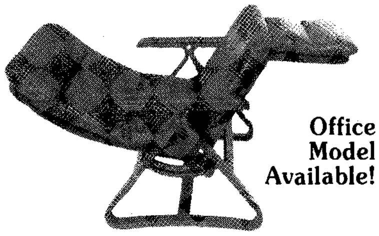

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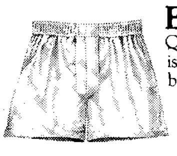

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munist bloc. He puts Laos's 1989 government expenditures at three hundred million dollars.

The positive glow from economic reforms and improved relations with its neighbors can't mask the enormous problems that Laos still faces. While the VCRs in the markets of Vientiane and the privately owned Mercedeses waiting at the Savannakhet airport to pick up arriving passengers demonstrate that Laos is starting to develop an entrepreneurial class, they are not signs of a prosperity with deep roots. Overwhelming poverty still grips the countryside, with many villages lacking doctors and schools, and depending on subsistence farming, because there are no roads to get crops to market. The government has only the most meagre resources available to provide medical care and education, and to repair the nation's shattered infrastructure. Vientiane's Mahosot Hospital, the largest in Laos, provides a dramatic example. Built in 1972 by the Americans, in a campuslike setting, it fell into complete disrepair under the Pathet Lao. "There was not a single toilet that flushed, no hot water, not a working drain," an official from the United Nations told me. "The operating room has no windows, and its air-conditioning hadn't worked for ten years. This year, we contributed something less than two hundred thousand dollars, and that paid to disinfect everything, paint the walls, fix the toilets, clear the drains, and take care of other problems. But after we got the drains working we discovered that they didn't go anywhere; all the sewage simply drained underneath the buildings. There's no program to dispose of medical wastes; they're just tossed away with everything else. And the government has no money to pay a maintenance staff to keep things running; there's not even money to replace light bulbs. So everything could go back to what it was. But we had to do something."

Most of the patients at Mahosot Hospital are being treated for malaria. I spoke to a French doctor studying malaria in Laos, and he told me that it is by far the leading cause of death for infants and children, and that it afflicts one out of four Laotians. The doctor said he had determined that a significant program of malaria control in Laos—local spraying, distribution of mosquito nets impregnated with an insecticide, and treatment of the disease—would cost only eight hundred thousand dollars a year. "But there's no money to finance operating expenses here," he said. "Just no money. There's no money to buy equipment, pay people, buy gasoline—there's simply no money."

Dr. Vannareth Rajpho, the Vice-Minister of Health, told me that doctors earned less than thirty dollars a month, and that some, in poor provinces, had to go as long as six months without pay. "We're spending in Laos one dollar per person a year for medical care," he said.

There are so few skilled administrators in Laos that the country isn't able to use efficiently what little foreign medical aid it now receives. "Today, they've built clinics in many villages, but the question is: Do they function?" a Western aid worker asks. "Medicines arrive from UNICEF and are locked up until they expire, because no one knows what to do with them. Russian medicines aren't used, either, because no one can read the labels saying what they are." At many ministries, long rows of offices lie vacant most of the day, because most of their occupants are out working at second jobs. Somphavan Inthavong told me that Laos had recently had a Soviet offer of a cement plant. "We would have had to build new roads, and to maintain it, so we refused it," he said. "Where would the technicians have come from? If you don't have a big stomach, you can't eat a big amount of food. Of the foreign aid we now receive, we can use only sixty per cent efficiently. The absorptive capacity is the key."

The Laotian economy faces some fundamental problems, hidden by the veneer of prosperity resulting from the economic reforms. Agriculture still dominates the economy, and ninety-five per cent of the farm production is rice. Years of little rain, such as 1987 and 1988, can therefore wipe out all other progress. The manufacturing sector is so small—just four per cent of the gross national product—that it barely exists; one of the few manufactured exports from Laos is toothpicks. The government's budget deficit stands at sixty per cent of expenditures, and the deficit has to be financed through foreign aid. The absence of skilled managers means that some of the joint-venture investments are amateurish at best. Late in 1988, a Thai company that engaged in scrap-metal trading established a joint-venture airline called Lao-Pacific. The agreement called for the Thais to contribute the capital and the Laotians the expertise. The "expertise" came from the curator of the national library in Vientiane, who left her job to become the chief Lao partner in the venture. Lao-Pacific has already folded.

There is considerable pessimism in Vientiane among Western residents who know Laos well. One of the country's major difficulties, they say, is its low level of visibility. "What will the Laotians do if they lose Russian and Eastern European aid because those countries are facing their own economic problems?" one Western diplomat asks. "Who is going to fill their dance card? And what will happen when peace is reached in Cambodia? Everyone will feel guilty about the Cambodians, and Laos will be lost in the shuffle. It's a country of four million people sitting between Thailand and Vietnam, each with more than fifty-five million people—how does Laos compete with them on its own?"

Ironically, one of the optimists is a man who had to flee Laos in 1975—Prince Panya Souvanna Phouma, the former Prime Minister's son, who now lives in Bangkok. Educated at the Harvard Business School, and fluent in Lao, Thai, French, and English, Panya came back from his February trip to Laos deeply impressed, and he isn't sure that the relative prosperity of Thailand is more enviable. "There is peace now in Laos," he told me in Bangkok. "Go to the countryside, see the people. Roads are being built, people are being taken care of. Do you want them to be workers in hotels? Do you want them to cut down their forests? Is it economic progress when the hill tribes in Thailand become beggars in Bangkok? Fifteen years is a short moment in time; give them more time. When you're a landlocked country, and everyone is ogling you because you have a small population and lots of territory, it's a wonder Laos is a nation today. I say, 'Stay closed, solve your problems slowly.' The Laotian people should be careful, and keep what they have untouched."

"After the truffle season peaks, we like to kick back and do a little clamming."

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THE Embassy of the United States occupies a sprawling compound of low-slung white buildings in the center of Vientiane, an easy walk from the Morning Market, the Mekong River, and the central commercial district. From those buildings Americans once ran a secret war and directed many of the activities of a subservient Laotian government. Today, the buildings hold just eight Americans—three diplomatic officials and a support staff of five. They're relatively young, knowledgeable about Laos—the second- and third-ranking officials speak fluent Lao—and free of the antagonism stemming from the Vietnam War which still colors American relations with Vietnam and Cambodia. They travel widely in the country, sometimes risking days of isolation in primitive conditions while waiting for the weather to clear enough for the old Russian-built helicopters of Lao Aviation to pick them up. For the past twelve years, the State Department and the government of Laos have been engaged in a delicate diplomatic dance—a couple of steps together for aid projects and then a couple of steps apart for a round of rebukes—but these days the two are closer than they've ever been. American disapproval of the Pathet Lao, once expressed by the onslaught of bombs, is now confined to diplomatic wrist-slapping. The rank of the head of the American Embassy in Vientiane, for instance, is itself a form of wrist-slapping; he is a chargé d'affaires, not an ambassador. Laos shares this stigma with only two other countries, Ethiopia and Grenada, and is eager for it to be removed. (According to several reports, the upgrading to ambassador is being blocked by some hard-liners in Washington who still believe that they can punish Vietnam by punishing its surrogate, Laos.) The current chargé, a career diplomat named Charles B. Salmon, Jr., has never met Prime Minister Kaysone.

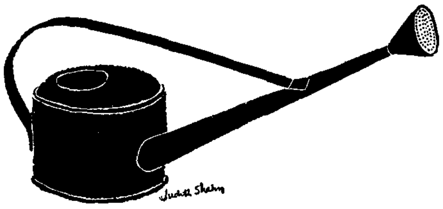
There is an American Embassy in Vientiane today only because of the peaceful nature of the Pathet Lao takeover. The violent Communist conquests of South Vietnam and Cambodia sent the Americans packing, but the Pathet Lao indicated from the outset that an American presence would be acceptable. Laos, like Cambodia, has a government that was initially dominated by Vietnam and supported by tens of thousands of Vietnamese troops, but in the case of Laos the peaceful transition in 1975 provided some continuity, and today the United States manages to deal with the Laotian government in a near-normal fashion while refusing to recognize the government of Cambodia because of its Vietnamese ties. Washington has lately had little to complain about, because it has made two major demands on Laos—coöperation in dampening the opium trade, and permission to search for the remains of Americans missing in action—and the Laotians have made significant attempts to meet them.

Laos is the world's third-biggest opium producer, although it lags well behind the first two—Burma and Afghanistan. As with every other Third World drug producer, defining the problem proves a lot easier than solving it. Opium cultivation has been traditional for a hundred and fifty years among the ethnic minorities in the mountains of northern Laos—ethnic minorities that have generally been estranged from and out of touch with the central government. The government has not been eager to deal with these minorities, but recently it did approve the start of a crop-substitution program. In an agreement signed last September, the United States pledged eight million seven hundred thousand dollars over a six-year period for the program, in the remote northeast, only about seventy miles from the former Pathet Lao caves of Sam Neua. (Whether all this money will actually be appropriated, however, is open to question.) According to the Agriculture and Forests official Kham Ouane, livestock, soybeans, and several other crops can actually prove more profitable than the opium poppy, provided that roads are built to get the products to market. The United States is financing the roads. In return, Laos has agreed to make a "maximum effort" to stop the opium trafficking, although it's uncertain how a country with its paucity of resources can halt the flow of drugs. In March, Laos was removed from the "decertification list"—a list that blocks American aid to countries that refuse to coöperate in curbing narcotics. The only countries decertified are those which get little or no American aid anyway, but the presence of Laos on the list had been a major sore point in Laotian-American relations—especially since the United States had accused Laotian civilian and military officials of participating in the drug trade. Discussing the renewed certification of Laos in testimony to Congress, a State Department official said, "High-level involvement of both military and civilian officials in the Lao government . . . continues to plague constructive coöperation with the U.S. It is difficult to balance corruption and ongoing trafficking activities on the one hand with the beginnings of coöperation on the other."

I discussed this statement with a well-informed Western ambassador in Vientiane.

"I don't believe that narcotics trafficking is organized on a national basis by the government," he said. "If it were, it would be the only organized thing in this country. But there's no doubt about a certain amount of involvement by individuals, particularly in the Army."

The question of Americans missing in action in Laos—the number is now five hundred and thirty-three—has also been thorny. While there is no hope that any of the Americans will be found alive, the United States insists on conducting excavations for their remains, so that the bones can be transported back to the United States for proper burial. The concept of elaborate, costly searches in Laos for American remains has been a bitter pill for the Laotian government, since thousands of Laotians were killed in the bombings and more die from *bombis* every year, and there has been no offer of American compensation. But the Laotian government recognized that the searches were being proposed as a prerequisite for better relations with Washington, and the two sides began to work together in 1985. The United States pays for the excavations, which are conducted by American-Laotian teams. There have been eleven digs so far, and they have yielded the remains of thirty-two Americans. (Inexplicably, the Laotians, while agreeing to these excavations, have turned down American offers of metal detectors and other means of finding and detonating the remaining *bombis*. Perhaps the Laotians feel that such aid would be humiliating to accept, but the government isn't saying.) Souban, the Deputy Foreign Minister, says, "The spirit of coöperation between the Laotians and the Americans in the excavation teams has been very good and very much appreciated. We want to create an atmosphere of trust and understanding. We want the people of the two countries to forget the hard times of war. We hope that by eradicating the past the United States government can change its thinking."



A major goal of the Laotian concessions on drugs and on the searches has been to encourage American aid—aid that could help repair the damage caused by the American bombing. But so far the amount of aid—charted to the last dollar by the United States Embassy in Vientiane, which is eager to seize on any proof of better relations—has been so tiny that the total figure would finance the building of no more than three miles of highway in the United States. In five separate years, the United States donated emergency rice shipments, worth a total of ten million five hundred and ninety thousand dollars. Over four years, it sent a hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars in medical supplies, the last contribution being duly recorded as four thousand dollars' worth in 1987. The crop-substitution program has brought seven hundred thousand dollars so far. All these figures add up to eleven million four hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars in American aid over a fifteen-year period—approximately the average amount spent for five days of the nine years of bombing.

Should the United States feel obligated to offer some sort of compensation for the damage done by the bombing? American government officials who reject the idea argue that the bombs were directed against North Vietnamese supply routes, not against

Laotians, and that any additional damage was unintentional and unavoidable. But their argument loses its force when the Plain of Jars is considered. This rolling meadowland, ringed by mountains, a hundred and ten miles northeast of Vientiane, was itself the object of hundreds of thousands of tons of bombs. The Plain of Jars was nowhere near the North Vietnamese supply routes, but on it were the roads that the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese would have had to take if they had attempted to march on Vientiane and Luang Prabang. In addition, there were reports that the Plain of Jars was used as a dumping ground for the bombs of American planes that were turned back from bombing runs over North Vietnam because of bad weather. "The Plain of Jars is simply littered with craters," a Western diplomat who has been there many times says. "It's hard to believe there were so many targets." The jars themselves—more than a hundred ancient stone urns, whose origins are unknown—came out relatively unscathed; only a few were shattered by the bomb blasts. The inhabitants of the plain fared significantly worse, and by 1969 most of the hundred and thirty thousand residents of Xieng Khouang Province had fled. The Laotians say that eight thousand and thirty-eight civilians in the province were killed by the bombing, eleven thousand three hundred and forty-five children were orphaned, and three hundred and fifty-three villages were razed.

Many of the Western diplomats and Western aid workers who live in Laos feel that the United States has a debt to pay. One official of an international organization who visits Laos frequently puts it this way: "Along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the Americans systematically bombed and bombed until everything was gone. The American people should understand that they owe the Laotians something. Laos is comparable to some of the worst countries in the Sahel in terms of health care. That's an atrocity; it's just not Asia. If you cross the river to Nong Khai, in Thailand, life expectancy goes up fifteen years. I'm German, and we paid war debts to Poland and to Israel. The United States has an equal obligation."

If the United States ever recognizes such an obligation, it already has a precedent for carrying it out—a precedent that demonstrates how the world's richest country can work hand in hand with one of the poorest countries. It's a precedent that eliminates the waste, corruption, and bureaucratic inertia so often associated with foreign aid, replacing them with enthusiasm and egalitarianism. This is the search for the remains of the missing Americans—the excavations carried out with Laotian participation by an American interservice military group, called the Joint Casualty Resolution Center, in conjunction with the United States Army Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii, or CILHI. To be sure, the operations are in no way meant to be foreign aid, and the Laotians involved in the excavations benefit only incidentally. Nevertheless, the effort gives an illuminating picture of what American aid to Laos could accomplish if reconstruction projects were modelled on it.

I had heard from the American Embassy in Vientiane that an excavation was going on near Xepon, where I was headed. While the Embassy officials couldn't give me its exact site, they agreed to radio the excavators that I was coming. It turned out that when my Laotian companions and I reached the Xepon area we didn't have to ask directions. Just a few miles down the Ho Chi Minh Trail from Route 9 we saw the blades of a Lao military helicopter. Turning onto a path to drive toward it, we came upon a surreal sight: a United States military camp, complete with green Army tents and three black Jeep Cherokees. There were no American soldiers around, but dozens of Laotian villagers had walked for miles to witness what was clearly the entertainment spectacle of the year. A Laotian teen-ager offered to take us on an hour-long hike, through the jungle and up the side of a mountain, to where the Americans were working. Part of the hike was along the rims of bomb craters, and at one point we passed a rusted bomb casing with the words "DISPENSER AND BOMB—122 LBS." neatly stencilled on its side. I was relieved to be following a local villager, who was familiar with the jungle, not only because of the bomb craters and possible bombs but because the Americans told me that this jungle, like that of nearby Vietnam, is the home of the so-called one-step snake. It gets that name because after it bites you the afflicted limb must supposedly be

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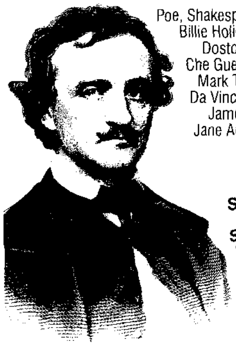

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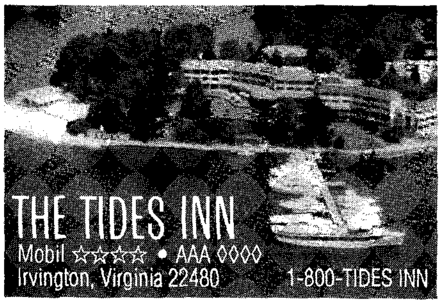

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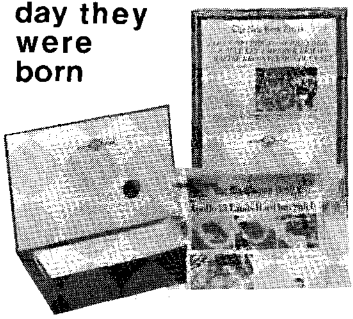

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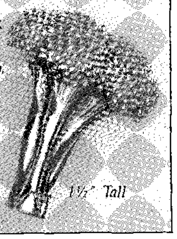

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hacked off before you take more than one step, or else you'll die. (When I returned to the United States, I inquired about this "one-step snake," which I had first read about during the Vietnam War. John Behler, the head of the Department of Herpetology at the Bronx Zoo, said that it was a myth, that there's no snake in Laos or Vietnam whose bite would be fatal in less than fifteen minutes.)

The trail took us into a clearing, where an American Army sergeant sitting at a wooden table was serving as sentry. He registered not a flicker of surprise at seeing a sweat-soaked American and five Laotians burst out of the jungle. He simply looked up and asked "May I help you?" in a tone that made it plain that, whoever we were and wherever we came from, we could go right back if we didn't have official clearance. Fortunately, the Americans here had received the Embassy's radio message, so I was taken on a tour by Major Hugh Klipp, the head of the recovery team. We walked around what turned out to be a professional archeological dig, complete with an anthropologist who works for CILHI. The area, where photoreconnaissance and interviews with villagers had indicated that a plane might have crashed, was roped off into sections, and workers were digging up soil, putting it in buckets, and sifting it through screens in a search for bone fragments. "What we're doing is an obligation to brother soldiers," Major Klipp told me. "They earned the right to come back to their families. The Laotians consider this somewhat curious, but to us it's really important that we bring back our dead. I can't say it's 'Spare no expense,' but there has never been a request where I've been told no. I have the Army, Marines, a Navy doctor, an Air Force technician—each service is committed. Airplanes are provided from all over the Pacific. It's a total government commitment. You never hear anyone say 'We can't.' It's always 'What can we do to make this happen?' "

Particularly striking was the coöperation at the site between Americans and Laotians, all of them casually dressed in T-shirts. Each American soldier digging a shovelful of soil was paired with a Laotian, hired from a nearby village to do the same thing. When the soil was sifted through a screen, an American held one end of it and a Laotian the other. Major Klipp himself had a Laotian equivalent at the site. Every American wore a name tag with his first name spelled out phonetically in Lao, and the Laotians wore English name tags. One bilingual American officer and one bilingual Laotian officer did the translating. Even though the Americans and the Laotians had been together only six days, one sensed a genuine affection and camaraderie, expressed through constant bantering. "We're not associated with the Vietnam War by the villagers," Major Klipp said. "The Laotians couldn't be more gracious—not only that but these guys are good workers. When the Laotians work with us, they see men, women, blacks, whites—how diverse the American people are."

Major Klipp suggested that I go back to camp and interview the Navy doctor, Jennifer Ruh. As part of the agreement setting up the excavations, the United States allowed the doctor at the site to examine local villagers and dispense whatever medicine was available. The news travelled by word of mouth, and, in an area with no other medical care, Dr. Ruh had found herself inundated. "I've seen seven hundred Laotians in six days," she told me. "They come from five or six different villages. There are a lot of upper-respiratory infections and skin diseases, and a lot of cases of worms. Our medical supplies ran out so quickly that yesterday I had to take the helicopter to Savannakhet and get more medicine for them. They're just delighted to see a doctor. It's the main spectacle around here. Sometimes fifty people watch all day." When I left Dr. Ruh's tent, at noon, there was a long line of people waiting patiently for her impromptu clinic to reopen, at two. Some of them carried live chickens, which they planned to give her as an expression of gratitude. But this heaven-sent privilege of medical care was not to last long. Two days after my visit, the excavation was shut down. It was a failure, for no remains were found. The camp was dismantled and packed up, and life on the Ho Chi Minh Trail returned to normal.

—STAN SESSER

•

Jett resigned after he was convicted by U.S. District Judge William E. Miller on three of the five charges. He later served six months of a three-month sentence.

—*Nashville (Tenn.) Banner.*

It just seemed that way, probably.

THE SKY LINE

Battery Park City

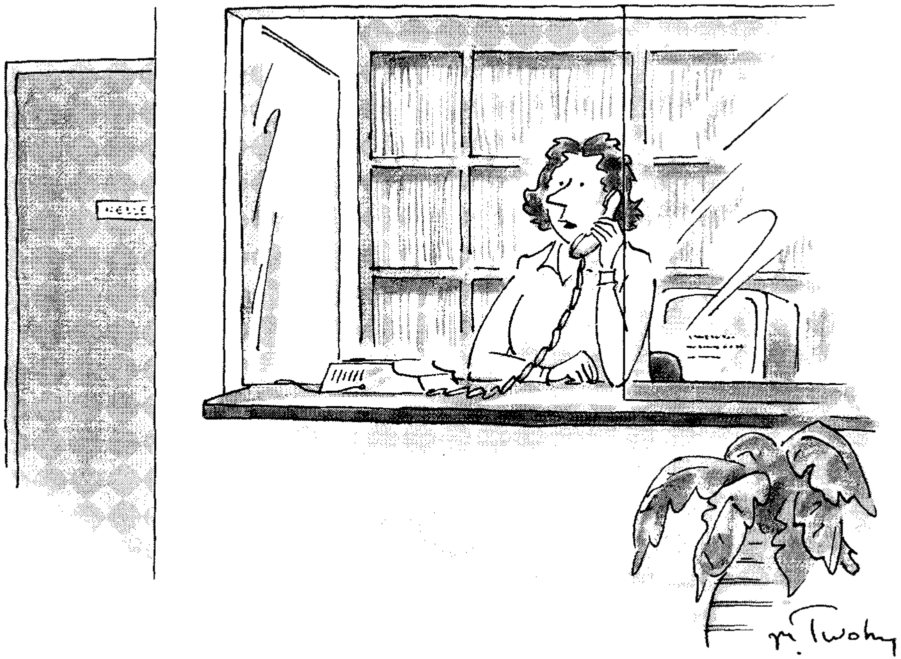
FROM the day of its founding, New York City has been continuously expanding in size. This expansion has been accomplished not merely by pushing its boundaries out over areas of land already in existence but by filling in areas hitherto occupied by ponds, streams, swamps, and ocean water. (The Collect Pond, on the site of what is now Foley Square, was big enough to accommodate the trial runs of an early steamboat designed by John Fitch.) No sooner had the Dutch established a combined fort and trading post on the little island of Manhattan than they set about extending its rocky, irregular shoreline. That was in the early sixteen-hundreds, and the city was called Nieuw Amsterdam; in 1674, the Dutch and the British having batted the growing town back and forth between them in military skirmishes that echoed events of far greater moment on the other side of the Atlantic, the British at last took permanent possession of it, naming it New York, in honor of a Duke of York who never troubled to visit it. The process of physical enlargement has continued at a vigorous rate ever since. One thinks of Water Street, which once faced directly upon the harbor and is now hundreds of feet distant from it.

From time to time, in the course of excavating a site for a new building, workers have encountered old foundation walls that, having emerged by chance, then disappear under a mass of freshly poured concrete, perhaps to be discovered again a couple of hundred years hence. It happened, for example, that a few years ago a number of early-nineteenth-century brick houses on Pearl Street, in the Fraunces Tavern block, were being remodelled into shops and apartments; taking advantage of the fact that portions of their foundations were having to be rebuilt, archeologists began a dig in the cellar of one of the houses. Sinking a shaft through the cellar floor, they made their way down, through several yards of mingled landfill and domestic debris, until they reached the undisturbed smooth sand of the harbor floor. At that point, they calculated that they were only a few yards away from the original stone seawall built by the Dutch. On the sandy floor of the harbor the diggers encountered a well-preserved seventeenth-century peach pit; its presence there irresistibly tempts one to imagine a plump Dutch burgher standing on the seawall eating a ripe peach at the end of an ample repast and then tossing the pit idly into the sea. Three hundred years later, visiting the Fraunces Tavern block, I hold the indestructible peach pit in my hand; somewhere under my feet may lie the buried remains of the seawall, but the sea itself is no longer visible.

Between the Dutch burgher's time and our own, several thousand acres of land have been added to the island of Manhattan. The latest and by far the largest single addition is the fill upon which the partly completed Battery Park City has been created. This city within a city occupies a tract of land extending, at its widest, about eight hundred feet into the Hudson River and running parallel to the Hudson shore for a distance of just over a mile and a quarter. Its neighbor to the south is Battery Park, and it extends just north of the west end of Chambers Street. Covering a total of ninety-two acres and attaining the not very lofty elevation of seven to sixteen feet above sea level, it contains a total of five million cubic yards of fill. Twenty-four acres of this fill came from the excavation of the site for the World Trade Center; the rest was dredged up hydraulically from the gravelly bottom of the Lower Bay.

In its day, the Battery Park after which Battery Park City was not very imaginatively named was also a considerable feat of landfill engineering. The chief feature of the park is a circular red sandstone fortress built to help defend the city against a possible naval attack in the years before the outbreak of the War of 1812. Originally known as the West Battery, it rose out of the harbor about three hundred feet offshore, being connected to the mainland by a wooden causeway and drawbridge. (The East Battery, now known as Castle Williams, was built just across the harbor, on Governors Island; the two batteries boasted a couple of dozen cannon apiece, but in the event the cannon were never fired except in practice and on a few celebratory occasions.) Having been transformed into a place of entertainment, the West Battery became known first as Castle Clinton and then as Castle Garden. Jenny Lind sang there as a young woman, as did Adelina Patti as a child. (Another child, of precisely her age, Henry James, recalled almost sixty years later, in his "A Small Boy and Others," having listened with awe at Castle Garden to the tiny Patti's trills and pipings.)

Between 1855 and 1889, Castle Garden served as the state's Emigrant Landing Depot, through which some eight million immigrants entered the



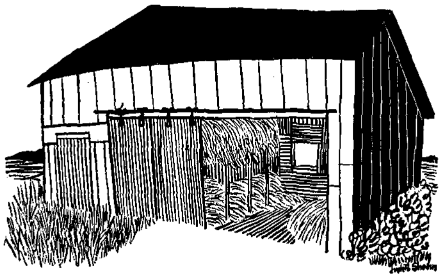
"I'm sorry. The doctor no longer makes phone calls."

country; when that function was taken over by a newly constructed station on Ellis Island (itself consisting largely of landfill), Castle Garden was turned into the city aquarium, and the surrounding area into a park. In the late nineteen-thirties, the park narrowly avoided being violated by Triborough Bridge Authority Chairman Robert Moses' planned Brooklyn-Battery Bridge, which would have risen directly above it. When that plan was defeated, Moses, who was also the city's Parks Commissioner, spitefully decided to knock down the old Castle Clinton, saying that it was endangered by the digging required for the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel (a project he had opposed). He also decided to build a new aquarium, at Coney Island. He succeeded in destroying the old aquarium, but history-minded citizens indignantly prevented him from entirely pulling down the walls of Castle Clinton; Moses' wrecking crew was halted in mid-career, and today the fort is what preservationists call a stabilized ruin.

For several decades, Battery Park provided the inhabitants of Manhattan with their only access to the open harbor—to that splendid, windswept marine prospect which had mightily pleased President Washington during his time in residence here, and which was subsequently blotted out at nearly every other point by piers, ferry terminals, elevated and surface highways, and high-rise office buildings. One of the indisputable physical benefits that we have gained from the construction of Battery Park City is a vast increase in that old Battery Park prospect from a site somewhat to the north and west of it but enjoying a no less spectacular breadth of sea and sky. The chief purpose of Battery Park City is to provide millions of square feet of new office space, housing, and retail space, and some thirty acres of parkland on our small island; in the course of doing so, the project is expected to generate enormous profits, a billion dollars' worth of which are pledged to the construction of low- and moderate-income housing in other sections of New York City. To this unchallengeably praiseworthy purpose have been added certain amenities for those ordinary citizens of New York who will never occupy a high-rise condominium in the development or berth an oceangoing yacht in its marina.

The well-paved, well-lighted, handsomely landscaped, seventy-foot-wide esplanade that makes it possible to look out over the harbor toward Staten Island, the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, and up and down the Jersey shore is far and away the most important of these amenities. Eventually it will thread its way through the length of the entire landfill, binding the various structures of the complex into what its designers have described as a series of gigantic outdoor rooms, each with a character of its own. Not the least of the esplanade's benefits as it already exists is that it encourages contemporary New Yorkers to spend an idle hour or two strolling along the Hudson shore, taking the sea air, and perhaps even eating a ripe peach, like our imagined Dutch burgher of yore (not, however, tossing the peach pit into the water in the careless seventeenth-century fashion but, rather, disposing of it in one or another of the many trash containers that have been placed discreetly along the boundaries of the esplanade).

At present, Battery Park City has a working population of approximately twenty-five thousand, while some six thousand people are living in apartments there. It is expected that when the project is completed, early in the next century, between thirty and forty thousand people will be working in the City and over twenty thousand people will be living there. It would be a city planner's dream come true if a large proportion of the people working in Battery Park City were the same people who enjoyed the advantage of dwelling there, but, alas, the economics of the situation are such that this is unlikely ever to be the case. The cheapest rental apartments, in what passes for the older section of Battery Park City (constructed in the early eighties), cost around eight hundred and fifty dollars a month, while the most expensive cost over three thousand. The cheapest condominiums sell for perhaps a hundred and sixty thousand dollars, and prices for others rise to something over a million. Although no recent statistics have been gathered on where the bulk of the working population of Battery Park City lives, it is safe to assume that a considerable disparity exists between the gilt-and-marble opulence—the Imperial Roman grandeur—of the skyscrapers and public spaces that make up the World Financial Center, designed by Cesar Pelli, which occupies the middle portion of Battery Park City, and the shoebox apartments or suburban bungalows or split-levels occupied by the rank-and-file employees of those immense corporations (American Express, Merrill Lynch, Oppenheimer & Company, and the like) which are the City's major office tenants and, as such, are the major sources of its revenues.



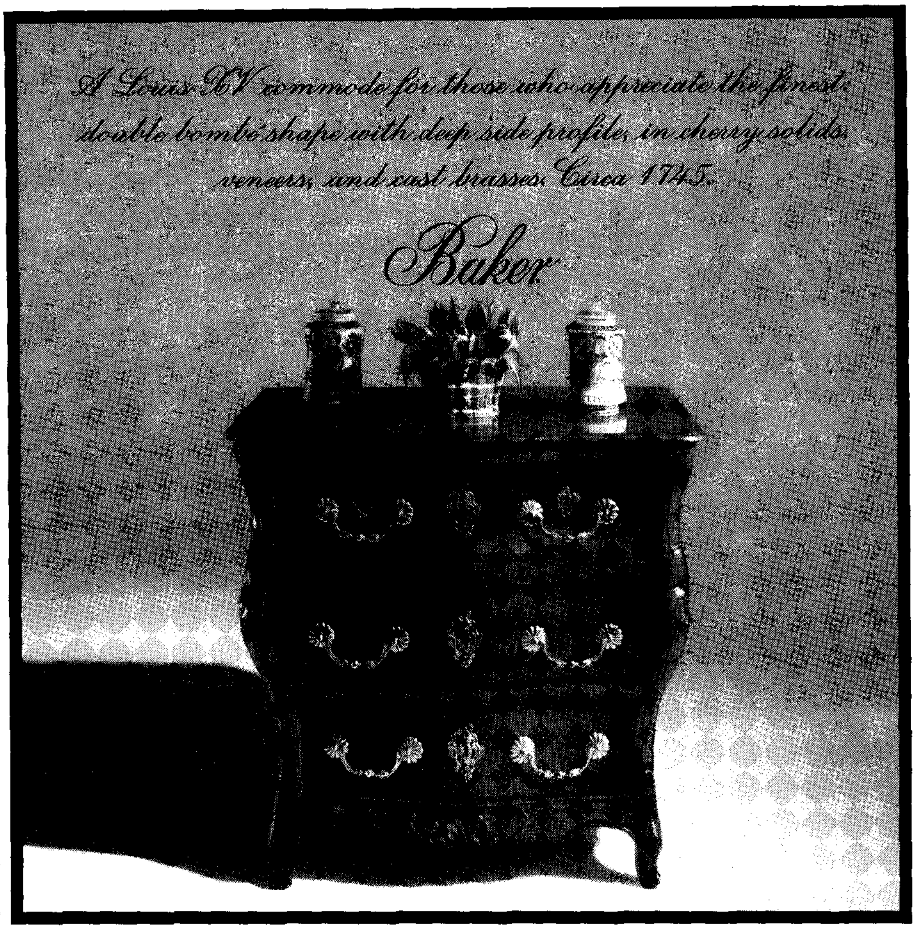
Now, this disparity, though not a good thing in itself, may not be a wholly bad thing, either—may even possess more favorable aspects than one is likely to take in at first glance. Many of us are inclined to disapprove of the construction of gaudy multi-billion-dollar extravaganzas at a time when we read in the press that the rich are constantly growing richer and the poor poorer; surely what is needed in New York City today is more shelter for the homeless, and not more golden cages for corporate peacocks to strut about in. Still, the psychological facts of life are often at odds with economics (a circumstance that developers and their architects are quick to take advantage of: grandiosity pays). It may well be that most of the people who work in, live in, or merely visit Battery Park City are delighted by the Brobdingnagian scale and fanciful ornamentation of the World Financial Center. Moreover, the good that is to flow out of the development as a whole—all those thousands of housing units that are to be rehabilitated or newly built on sites scattered throughout the five boroughs—may be thought by heavily taxed New Yorkers to justify almost any amount of profitable architectural hyperbole.

If the glass-domed, galleria-like Winter Garden, which is intended to serve as the heart of Battery Park City, proves to be truly a heart, quickening the pulses of even a fraction of those who hasten through it in the course of carrying out their necessary business tasks, then only the sternest of self-appointed urban critics is likely to raise objections to it. The aesthetics of the

Pelli design aside, one may be tempted to liken its emotional impact to that of Grand Central Terminal, which it resembles in size (all that throwaway aerial space above our heads!), and which twice daily for the tens of thousands of commuters who frequent it lightens the burden of entering and leaving New York City. The great open plaza upon which the Winter Garden faces provides not only a space for walking about but open-air cafés for eating and drinking and also serves as an open-air stage for a variety of entertainments. Again, one is reminded of precedents: the high cost of bread and circuses may have helped bring about the fall of Rome, but what if, in the course of postponing that fearsome moment, bread and circuses also served to make Romans happy? Throughout the summer, many thousands of people have been attending concerts and dance performances in the plaza, and the pleasure they have been receiving does not imply that an apocalyptic catastrophe is bound to follow; the Goths may be rattling their spears in the outskirts, but they haven't arrived *yet*. On the contrary, we are in the presence of what is in most respects a seductively attractive addition to our city. Are there not reasons to be grateful for it even as we shake our heads in bewilderment over the perilous, zigzag succession of events that brought it into existence?

LIKE most successful enterprises, Battery Park City as it stands today looks as if it couldn't possibly have failed. The fact is, however, that it teetered on the brink of failure not once but several times. Seeking to prosper, it was often obliged to alter its nature, and yet in order to preserve its legitimacy it had to appear fundamentally unchanged. The first scheme for landfill development of the city-owned piers along the Hudson River in lower Manhattan was announced in 1963, by the Department of Marine and Aviation, which administered the piers and the land under them as far out as the pierheads. Maritime use of the piers had declined almost to the vanishing point; some of the structures themselves were rapidly deteriorating.

Some years earlier, David Rockefeller, then the vice-chairman of the Chase Manhattan Bank, had organized a group called the Downtown–Lower Manhattan Association, whose purpose



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was to revitalize the Wall Street area at a time when many real-estate people were predicting that business interests would soon be moving en masse into midtown. (In a bold gesture opposing this trend, Rockefeller had seen to the construction of a new skyscraper headquarters for the Chase in the very heart of the financial district; completed in 1960, it was the largest major real-estate development in the area since the period before the Second World War.) The Rockefeller group had been urging the development of a World Trade Center by the Port of New York Authority; when a decision was reached to build the Center on West Street, just in from the Hudson, the opportunity to take advantage of the enormous amount of landfill that would become available made the Department of Marine and Aviation scheme seem more desirable than ever. (The landfill was important not only because it would create a large tract of land at low cost but because not having to transport the excavated material to some distant point would mean a major saving for the builders of the World Trade Center.) Thanks to two facts—that David Rockefeller's brother Nelson was governor of New York, and that Nelson possessed an exceptionally strong bent for building (particularly for building on a prodigious scale: what was mockingly referred to as his "edifice complex")—the landfill project received enthusiastic backing from the state. Indeed, the Governor, characteristically, expressed an interest in taking over the entire project.

During the early sixties, a number of alternative proposals for the landfill project, and for the redevelopment of all of lower Manhattan as well, were under discussion by representatives of the city, the state, the Port Authority, the Downtown–Lower Manhattan Association, and other groups. Some parties to the discussions were in favor of devoting the newly created land wholly to housing; others were in favor of some form of mixed use, combining office buildings, hotels, and the like with a grand shopping mall and housing in varying proportions. Housing itself was an occasion for fierce debate—how much subsidized low- and moderate-income housing should there be, and how much unsubsidized, "market" housing, *which is to say housing at the* current market price? By the middle sixties, the city was championing one set of proposals, and the state was championing another. The city's plan, designed by a consortium of architects and engineers led by architects William Conklin, James Rossant, and David Wallace, was praised as powerful and imaginative, and the state's plan, which was largely the handiwork of Wallace K. Harrison (who was the designer of Governor Rockefeller's vast, ice-cold government mall in Albany), was damned as a weary echo of Le Corbusier. In the negotiations that followed, dozens of architects, city planners, accountants, and politicians undertook to work out a compromise in respect to purposes, design, costs, and hoped-for revenues. State legislation establishing the Battery Park City Authority (B.P.C.A.) was enacted in 1968, shortly after Governor Rockefeller and Mayor John V. Lindsay announced the launching of a joint state-city "master development plan," and the plan, which combined elements of both its ancestors, was completed the following year. Battery Park City was to be a futuristic, ambitious city within a city, costing over a billion dollars.

According to the terms of the original legislation, the cost of demolishing the old piers on the site, finishing the landfill (already begun with the material taken from the World Trade Center), and preparing a complicated infrastructure would be financed by the issuance of two hundred million dollars' worth of so-called moral-obligation bonds—a then popular, and subsequently abandoned, method of financing construction projects throughout the state without having to submit them to the approval of voters. Work on the site in the early nineteen-seventies was accompanied by studies of the probable state of the real-estate market by the time the site would be ready for building upon. Nationally, we were about to enter the recession of 1974-75; locally, the glut of unrented office space amounted in 1973, the peak year, to more than thirty million square feet, which left developers understandably leery of financing further construction.

In 1975, Hugh Carey became governor; much as he deplored the lack of progress at Battery Park City—even the landfill itself was not completed until 1977—there was little that he could accomplish as long as the B.P.C.A. was under the control of members of the board of directors who had been appointed for fixed terms by the late Governor Rockefeller. In early January, 1979, Carey was able to appoint two new members to the three-person board. One of them, William D. Hassett, Jr., was the chairman of the state's Urban Development Corporation (U.D.C.), and he became chairman of the B.P.C.A. as well. A month later, the board named Richard Kahan, already serving as president and chief executive officer of the U.D.C., to take those posts at the B.P.C.A. as well. In this fashion, the B.P.C.A. became, in effect, part of the U.D.C.

Kahan, a boyish-looking man of thirty-two, had already demonstrated an exceptional combination of executive finesse and political fearlessness in the course of his rapid rise to the presidency of the U.D.C. Born in New York City, he had graduated from Union College, in Schenectady, and from Columbia Law School, and had studied urban planning at the Columbia University School of Architecture. He worked at the U.D.C. in 1971 and 1972, and from 1973 to 1976 he was a vice-president of the Lefrak Organization, one of the largest real-estate concerns in the city. He left Lefrak to rejoin the U.D.C. While he was the head of both the U.D.C. and the B.P.C.A., he also ran the Convention Center Development Corporation. Like the B.P.C.A. project, the construction of a new convention center for New York City had languished for years in a sort of bureaucratic trance; when Kahan resigned from his Convention Center job, in 1982, the building was well on its way to completion, on time and on budget.

Some time before taking command of the B.P.C.A. project, Kahan had happened to read an article in which the architect and urban designer Alexander Cooper described what he perceived to be crucial differences between those two often linked but essentially disparate professions. According to Cooper, an architect puts his talent and professional skills at the disposal of a particular client and, in serving the best interests of that client, often enough gives little thought to the broad public consequences of his doing so (unless, of course, the client himself is prepared to address these consequences—something that rarely happens). The urban designer's client, on the other hand, is always the public. Cooper believes that streets are the soul of the city and that it is foolish to substitute enclosed pedestrian skyways for open sidewalks at street level.

Since the master plan for Battery Park City which Kahan had inherited—and had been instinctively repelled by—called for an isolated Corbusian checkerboard of buildings constructed on multilevel concrete platforms, or "pods," between which pedestrians would be shunted back and forth as strictly as cattle in a stockyard, he was delighted to encounter Cooper's praise of the old-fashioned, populous city street. Kahan got in touch with Cooper, found much to admire in a further exploration of his principles of urban design, and with his usual decisiveness in late June commissioned him and his partner, Stanton Eckstut, to provide a new master plan for the site within ninety days. Extreme speed was of the essence, because the B.P.C.A. was facing imminent default on its two-hundred-million-dollar bond issue. Kahan needed to submit the plan to the State Legislature for its approval, in order to persuade that body (understandably irritated by the prolonged sleep into which the project had fallen) not simply to pay off the bondholders and "warehouse" the land for an indefinite period but to authorize new spending.

Cooper and Eckstut's mandate was, in effect, to devise a master plan that would make Battery Park City, as they said in their report presenting the plan, "more attractive for investment and responsive to current planning approaches." The report, submitted in late 1979, cited a number of external reasons for the continuing failure of the project, among which were the large amount of unrented office space in New York City, the virtual cutoff of federal support for housing, and the succession of fiscal crises that the city and state had been obliged to confront and survive. According to the report, among the internal reasons for the project's failure were the master plan's "excessively rigid large-scale development format," which had prevented gradual devel-

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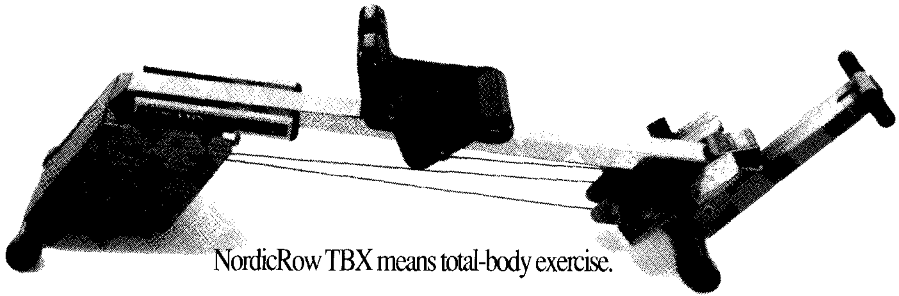

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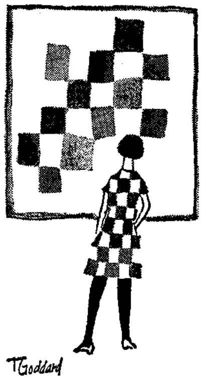
opment of the site; and unduly complicated controls over every detail of the project.

As Cooper and Eckstut's report went on to explain, several of the external problems cited had already begun to resolve themselves. The thirty-two million square feet of empty office space that existed in 1973 had been reduced to nine million square feet, and lower Manhattan alone had absorbed three million square feet the year before. Downtown rents were rising and soon would justify new construction. The report concluded that five or six million square feet of commercial space could be successfully leased out, especially if the commercial space indicated in the original master plan were to be shifted from the south end of the landfill area and consolidated into a single central area, adjacent to the World Trade Center. According to the report, the large shopping mall envisaged in the original master plan was no longer feasible and should be replaced by retail shopping units scattered through the project; the number of subsidized housing units should be sharply reduced; and Pier A, at the southern tip of the project, should be returned to the city, which had expressed an interest in developing it as a landmark attraction. (A decade later, the restoration and conversion of Pier A—into four restaurants and a small museum—is finally getting under way.)



Toward the end of 1979, Governor Carey, Mayor Edward I. Koch, and Kahan signed a memorandum of understanding (in large part the handiwork of Kahan and of Robert F. Wagner, Jr., then the chairman of the City Planning Commission, as well as the Mayor) incorporating nearly all the recommendations of Cooper and Eckstut's report. The most revolutionary aspect of the memorandum called for Battery Park City to become not an austerely sequestered urban exercise but, rather, an extension of the traditional New York City street grid (an extension unavoidably interrupted by West Street, a six-lane through road). Moreover, the designers of the new central commercial area would no longer be subject to the detailed planning constraints and time-consuming review processes of the earlier plan, and, as for the designers of the residential areas to the north and south of the commercial area, the agreement said that they would be subject either to the old master development plan or to a "revised policy and program" that the city and the B.P.C.A. would "diligently" develop.

According to the terms of the memorandum of understanding, the city, which was the owner of the landfill area, would allow the U.D.C. to condemn the site. This was a quick way to give the U.D.C. ownership of the land, and to release it from the financial and planning controls the city had imposed. The city received one dollar in exchange, as well as essentially all future profits and tax equivalents. Ownership of the land would revert to the city once the B.P.C.A. bonds and any funds advanced by the state had been paid off. In July, some thirty interested developers were invited to make proposals for the commercial area. Twelve bids were submitted in October, and in November the B.P.C.A. conditionally approved a proposal by the Canadian real-estate company Olympia & York to undertake the entire development of the commercial portion of the site, which would bear the modest name of World Financial Center. It was planned to be a billion-dollar project, to begin in 1981 and reach completion in 1985. Olympia & York pledged payments to the B.P.C.A. that, in the nineties alone, will total over a billion dollars. Olympia & York held an architectural competition, in which half a dozen prominent architectural firms were invited to take part, with the stipulation that they were to follow the guidelines that had been established by the B.P.C.A. The winner of this competition was the firm of Cesar Pelli & Associates. Specific design plans were announced in May, 1981 (the estimated date of completion being advanced to 1987 and subsequently to 1988), and the first lease was signed in November, 1981—with the City Investing Corporation. Ground was broken the following month. Of the two major commercial leases, the first was signed with American Express, in March, 1982, for a million seven hundred thousand square feet of office space, and the second, which completed the leasing of the Center, with Merrill Lynch, in August, 1984, for over three million square feet.

As for the residential units, the first of them, called Gateway Plaza, had been held up by years of delays in the granting of mortgage insurance by the Federal Housing Administration, intended to aid in the construction of moderate-income housing. The insurance having been obtained, finally, in 1980, construction was started immediately. The developer was the Lefrak Organization, chosen by the previous B.P.C.A. administration, and Lefrak employed the firm of Harrison & Abramovitz to build the Battery Park City units. Although these buildings went up under the new Kahan regime, their design, on which F.H.A. approval had been based, was more suited to the old Corbusian plan. The Gateway Plaza buildings have a grim, gray penitentiary look, fortunately not shared by the apartment houses, of red brick and limestone, that an assortment of private developers have since erected nearby, to the designs of such well-known architects as Charles Moore, Gruzen Sampton Steinglass, Mitchell/Giurgola, James Stewart Polshek & Partners, Ulrich Franzen & Associates, and Davis, Brody & Associates. The red brick buildings are, to be sure, luxury housing, but even the Lefrak buildings were advertised as being in the "luxury" class. (The fact is that the dimensions of the rooms in *all* the housing units so far constructed at Battery Park City are on a minimal scale, disappointingly at odds with the exterior scale of the project as a whole.)

At the end of 1983, Richard Kahan left the B.P.C.A. With Richard Sennett, a professor of urban sociology at New York University, he is currently director of the Urban Assembly, which deals with issues of city planning in developing nations. In the jargon of real-estate developers, Kahan is given credit for having "reconceptualized" the B.P.C.A., which is to say that he and his colleagues transformed it, to the surprise of most New Yorkers, from a moribund political boondoggle into a thriving symbiotic union between the public and the private sectors. With a suddenness that seemed downright miraculous but was in fact a natural consequence of Kahan's willingness to take chances and act fast, great towers stood gleaming against the sky, gardens bloomed, and thick-trunked trees (no mere saplings) unfurled their banners of green leaves. To the further surprise of New Yorkers, accustomed as we all are to the fact that nearly everything that concerns this city provides an occasion for plunging us ever deeper into debt, the project promised to become a gold mine.

The man whom Governor Mario Cuomo appointed late in 1983 to help guide the direction in which the gold should flow was Meyer S. Frucher, universally addressed by the nickname Sandy. Frucher grew up in New York, and graduated from Columbia University and then from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He had recently been the state's chief labor negotiator. It would be hard to imagine two men more unlike each other than Kahan and Frucher. Kahan, now in his forties, is cool and soft-spoken, and takes what amounts almost to a novelist's view of the hurly-burly of the political process; Frucher, also in his forties, is a rumpled, headlong extrovert, who appears to relish the collisions, whether of ideas or people, that go along with accomplishment. In the B.P.C.A.'s 1987 annual report the ebullient Frucher undertook to describe his intentions at B.P.C.A.:

> When Governor Cuomo asked me to become President of Battery Park City Authority he said to me, "Give it a soul. Without a soul the beauty will be superficial." This was a difficult challenge, but one that I think we have met in essentially two ways: through the Housing New York Program and by making Battery Park City a destination for all New Yorkers.
>
> As the architectural success of Battery Park City became apparent, it was clear that we would have a financial success as well. Under Governor Cuomo's direction we developed the Housing New York Program funded by proceeds from excess Battery Park City revenues to create low and moderate income housing in New York City. In 1986 the Legislature authorized $400 million for Housing New York, and in 1987 the first $210 million in Housing New York bonds were issued for the creation of 1,850 units in the South Bronx and Harlem. Further, the Mayor and the Governor have approved an additional $600 million for housing, thus creating a $1 billion dollar housing program from the revenues of Battery Park City.
>
> Our second approach was to develop Battery Park City as a destination for people other than the workers and residents of the area. To that end we are moving ahead with the Museum of Jewish Heritage—a Living Memorial to the Holocaust on the southwestern tip of our site; we are building a new Stuyvesant High School at the northeastern end of the site. . . . Already the Winter Garden in World Financial Center is attracting visitors with its Arts & Events Program funded by Olympia & York, the Center's developer, [and by] American Express and Merrill Lynch, its principal tenants. . . .
>
> An independent group of art-world professionals—The Battery Park City Fine Arts Committee—is responsible for recommending sites and selecting artists . . . to design environmental works sensitive to their settings. . . . [The] Committee has conceived an overall plan for permanent environmental sculpture. Along the river, works of art are set where public streets meet the Esplanade.
>
> The first piece, at Albany Street, is Ned Smyth's "The Upper Room," installed in 1987. It is an elevated bluestone plaza surrounded by terra cotta columns. Within the perimeter are a pyramidal sanctuary and a long banquet table inlaid with six chessboards.
>
> The second piece, standing at Rector Place, is by R. M. Fischer. It is a 48-foot archway of illuminated metals, calling to mind a nineteenth century union of industrial technology and the gardenesque.
>
> The third piece is Richard Artschwager's "Sitting/Stance," an essay on the civic table-and-chair. Reversing scale and proportions, Artschwager refashions traditional park elements and sets them to new tasks in this quiet Esplanade alcove.

Frucher left the B.P.C.A. about two years ago to assume an executive position with Olympia & York and is now busily occupied in bestowing souls upon O. & Y. projects in San Francisco, London, and other cities that may be thought to be in need of them. I detected in the portion of the B.P.C.A.'s 1987 annual report quoted above a certain unease when Frucher abandoned the specifics of construction and funding and ventured into description of the art works that have begun to populate the area. What did "gardenesque" mean? For that matter, what was a "civic table-and-chair"? In the course of a number of visits to Battery Park City, I have come to sympathize with Frucher's literary difficulties; the relation of "soul" to individual art pieces in Battery Park City is hard to pin down. As is the case with so much of what is called public art, it is public in the sense of being in a public place but is likely to remain private in terms of its content. Smyth's chessboards, for example, are obviously community-oriented and—as the current computer slang has it—user-friendly, but the columned space within which they stand strikes me as too fragile for its setting: it is a toy Karnak temple placed where the gigantic original might well strike us as being of a more appropriate size.

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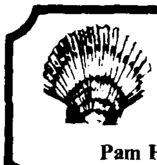

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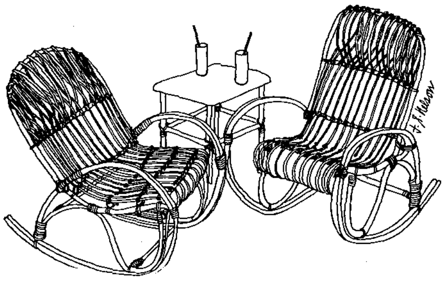
as a whole, one is left in less doubt of its fitness. It has been carried out with a boldness of spirit commensurate with the large scale of the buildings and the scale of the views up, down, and across the river. Well-known landscape architects, among them M. Paul Friedberg, Innocenti-Webel, and Susan Child, have contributed to the over-all design of the area, in collaboration with such artists as Scott Burton, Siah Armajani, and Mary Miss, who have long been accustomed to creating in outdoor settings works in stone, wood, and other materials. At the South Cove site, Miss, Child, and Stanton Eckstut have invented an irresistibly romantic stage set of New York Harbor as they wish us to believe it may have looked in the seventeenth century, with clusters of pilings rising in tipsy disorder just offshore and, along the shore, granite boulders emerging from banks of dune grass, bayberry, rugosa roses, and other hardy plants. One climbs a steel-framed lookout that wittily echoes the shape of the Statue of Liberty's crown, or treads the wooden planking of a pier that has already begun to age convincingly under the assaults of sunlight and sea spray. Back from the edge of the harbor, a path winds gently uphill through a grove of feathery honey locusts, and one is hard pressed to remember that the path and the hill and the locusts all rest upon a foundation of steel and concrete, laced with water pipes, drains, and electric conduits. If we sniff in the air not only the delicious odor of Atlantic brine but of Disneyland as well, no matter: a fictional seascape of considerable beauty is surely better than no seascape at all.

Other welcome-sounding wonders are yet to come, for, although Battery Park City appears to the casual visitor to be almost complete, as many as a dozen major projects remain unbuilt. These projects will be carried out as the market permits under the guidance of Frucher's successor, David Emil, a thirty-nine-year-old lawyer, former deputy commissioner and general counsel to the state's Department of Social Services, and scion of a well-known local real-estate family (his father, Arthur Emil, recently completed the transformation of the old Police Headquarters building, on Centre Street, into a stately pleasure dome of expensive coöperative apartments). Among these projects are the South Gardens, which will be laid out on three and a half acres of land toward the southern tip of the development, at the point where it borders Battery Park. Alexander Cooper and the artist Jennifer Bartlett were chosen to design what was then known as South Park, and Ms. Bartlett got off to a maladroit—if forthright—start when she told the B.P.C.A.'s Fine Arts Commission, which recommended her for the project, that "the only thing I was interested in doing was a very complicated garden, which would cost an enormous amount of money and be very expensive to maintain," and when she later said, in a magazine interview, that she had "never looked at a garden in my life." Her design consisted of a grid of twenty-four rectangular outdoor "rooms," measuring fifty feet on a side; the interior spaces of many rooms were to be entirely filled with flowers, and the perimeter of the garden as a whole was to be walled in part with concrete to a height that would have prevented any visitors to it from catching a glimpse, except through scattered cutouts, of the nearby prospect of river, harbor, and Jersey shore. Community Board 1, along with many residents of Battery Park City and neighboring Tribeca, raised a howl of protest over Ms. Bartlett's plans. So did a number of professional horticulturists, who said that the flowers she had it in mind to plant would never survive the conditions imposed on them and that the maintenance of the garden would be, in any event, prohibitively high. A new landscape architect, Nicholas Quennell, was called in by the B.P.C.A. to help Ms. Bartlett and Mr. Cooper redesign the project. After an extended period of effort (and prudent silence from Ms. Bartlett), a new design has been unveiled, with fewer and lower hedges and no border wall, with plants that are known to take kindly to our climate and sinister air, and with an abundance of water in pools and channels. Construction is expected to be under way by the end of the year.

A new hotel and two apartment buildings will look south over the South Gardens in a majestically curving street-wall that is intended to create an effect as grand as the sweep of neoclassical buildings on upper Riverside Drive. It is also intended that these buildings will help to remedy what has long been perceived as a defect in the plan of Battery Park City—the degree to which its buildings turn their backs upon West Street, treating that breadth of concrete wasteland as even more inimical a barrier than it is and thus isolating the project from the very city of which Cooper and Eckstut argued that it must be an integral part. To that end, the hotel and perhaps one of the apartment buildings will have lobby entrances facing upon West Street.



Another project, the Museum of Jewish Heritage, some time ago agreed to give up its highly desirable waterside plot of land near the South Cove in order to make it available for the construction of a high-rise apartment house, whose developer agreed, in effect, to buy the museum's old lease. The museum's new site is every bit as desirable as the one that it had been promised; it would be built directly behind the grove of locusts bordering the South Cove and would enjoy an excellent view of the Hudson. The developers of the new building having run into financing difficulties, the proposed change of site and the beginning of construction for the museum, which is being designed by the firm of James Stewart Polshek & Partners, are now "on hold"—a phrase heard more and more frequently in local real-estate circles these days. To the north of the new museum site, an apartment building is already under construction, also designed by the Polshek group. Beneath the building an excavation of surprising depth was carved out of the landfill; a cluster of subterranean movie theatres has been neatly tucked into place there. They will open in 1991.

At the uptown end of Battery Park City, on some thirty acres of sandy landfill, with only the streets built so far, a further manifestation of Cuomo "soul" will take the form of an eight-acre park along the riverbank. The chief feature of the park, scheduled to open in 1992, will be an immense open meadow, surrounded by trees and shrubs. Already under construction on a parcel of land on the north side of Chambers Street is the new Stuyvesant

High School, which will have an enrollment of three thousand students from throughout the five boroughs, selected by competitive examinations. (Appropriately, Alex Cooper, the designer of so much else in Battery Park City, has been chosen as the architect for the school, along with the firm of Gruzen Sampton Steinglass.) An extension of the esplanade will run along the edge of the park and in front of the school to West Street and, perhaps, continue up the river. This portion of the esplanade will enjoy a striking view of a broad reach of the Hudson between the end of the landfill and the rotting remains of Pier 25, and Emil and his colleagues would like nothing better than to be able to fill a section of that reach with a community boating facility, capable of mooring twenty-five to fifty boats. "Think of the river filled with sailboats on a fine summer's day!" Emil exclaims. "The Hudson should be what Lake Michigan is for Chicagoans, what the Bay is for San Franciscans."

In the area running south from Stuyvesant High School to Vesey Street, developers will construct apartment houses along North End Avenue—a new boulevard whose wide center islands have been laid out to resemble miniature parks, with paved walkways and ornamental trees. In its urban sophistication, North End Avenue will be not unlike the residential Park Avenue of three-quarters of a century ago. Other apartment buildings will go up along a winding street called River Terrace, west of North End Avenue and looking out over the park to the Hudson. Like North End Avenue, River Terrace is linked to extensions of Vesey, Murray, Warren, and Chambers Streets, reënforcing in a mildly eccentric fashion the ancient gridiron pattern of streets laid out in the New York City Plan of 1811. And it is Emil's hope that the buildings in this northern portion of Battery Park City can be designed to present a welcoming façade upon West Street.

DURING the long, sorry years of the Koch administration, I had been among those whose voices were raised in protest against the many wrong turns that the city was taking in the course of giving itself away to the highest bidders: constantly breaking its own long-established rules in respect to planning and zoning, dissipating ad lib its precious assets of light and air, ignoring the maintenance of its infrastructure, and exhausting its capacity to deal with the disposal of garbage and sewage. I mention only in passing those other major problems—drugs, education, general lawlessness—that New York City shares with innumerable cities from coast to coast, in order to keep the list of our local errors and blunders within bounds; there have been enough of them to induce despair in the hardiest of optimists.

In my case, the despair that I was prompted to feel by the conditions I encountered elsewhere in the city gave way, in the hours that I spent visiting Battery Park City, to a tentative, infinitesimal tremor of hope. I reflected that even in its incomplete state Battery Park City, in terms of its ambitions as well as its cost, was already, by my amateur reckoning, the biggest single real-estate project ever undertaken in this country. If it should turn out to be among the most profitable as well both to the city and to the developers, so much the better for all New Yorkers. Remarkable as that achievement would be, something equally remarkable might also have taken place by then: Battery Park City might have succeeded in weaving itself into the fabric of the city as inextricably, and as fruitfully, as Rockefeller Center has done. Which is to say that it might have become not only a lure irresistible to trippers and shoppers but also a symbol of the enduring vitality of the city—a city that, at the very moment when Battery Park City was under construction, seemed to stand on the verge of becoming economically and psychologically uninhabitable. (Similarly, Rockefeller Center was built as the city was slipping into what many doomsayers described at the time as an irreversible depression.)

My first impulse was to deny to myself that I felt any such tremor of hope in respect to Battery Park City—with the wariness of a seasoned New Yorker, I forced myself to doubt the likelihood that Battery Park City could be a good in itself, much less serve as a model for good in other portions of the city and even in other cities as well. But, the slovenly, giveaway Koch administration having come to an end at last, in the first months of David Dinkins' administration my tremor of hope began to gain strength—began to pass from being a mere hope to assuming the semblance of a realizable possibility. For the dire economic situation that New York City confronts today and that Mayor Dinkins has courageously predicted may worsen in the years to come possesses, if not a bright side, then a side whose darkness offers certain opportunities, not all of them grim. The building boom that turned a handful of local millionaires into billionaires has now plainly run its course; the bankers and insurance-company executives who chose to invent many of these billionaires by handing out funds with a recklessness that would have made a nineteenth-century Mississippi-riverboat gambler blanch have retreated into their marble caves and resumed their haughty, touch-me-not airs. The hard times that we are being warned against are—or are capable of being—an occasion for catching our breath and for making plans.

Among architectural preservationists it is a common saying that poverty is a friend of preservation. Despite the labors of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, many precious buildings have been lost to us over the past decade of boom times. With new construction tapering off, it will be easier for individual buildings of architectural and historical value to be saved. (This is especially true of buildings whose merits, though recognized by experts, have yet to be recognized by the public at large.) Of greater importance is the fact that, instead of being ruthlessly bulldozed out of existence, much of the ordinary, aging, anonymous building stock of the city will be brought up to date, providing at a bearable cost housing for the poor and shelterless. Harlem alone contains hundreds upon hundreds of acres of run-down but sturdily built housing stock, and so do vast stretches of the Bronx.

Instead of the persistent, mindless overbuilding of a city that cannot readily dispose of another ounce of sewage or another pound of garbage, our city planners can begin to think, as they were encouraged to do during the Great Depression, of turning unbuilt-upon land into parks and playgrounds. The desolate wastelands created over the past couple of decades by the whole-

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sale abandonment and demolition of tenement buildings and apartment houses become, in hard times, an occasion for creating new amenities in a city desperately in want of them. One thinks not only of Harlem and the Bronx but of the seventy-six acres that Donald Trump owns along the shore of the Hudson a couple of miles upstream from Battery Park City—the largest parcel of unbuilt-upon land remaining in Manhattan, on which Trump once hoped to create a "television city" (including a new headquarters for NBC), with an accompaniment of scores of shops and thousands of high-priced apartments. The architect originally chosen to design the project was Helmut Jahn, of Chicago. When his design (whose chief feature was to be the highest skyscraper in the world, rising out of a procession of five other sixty-plus-story-high skyscrapers) met with almost universal public disfavor, Jahn was dismissed, and Alex Cooper was chosen to succeed him. Now, interesting as it might be to see how many of the lessons learned in the course of helping to design Battery Park City Mr. Cooper would find himself able to employ in devising, among other outsize structures, the impertinent folly of a fifteen-hundred-foot-high skyscraper, it would be far more interesting—and of infinitely greater benefit to the citizens of New York—if Trump were to give up his grandiose plans for the site and the city were to buy it, perhaps as the setting for a future park, linked by a greenbelt of pedestrian walkways and bicycle paths stretching along the Hudson from Battery Park City to Riverside Park. Just such a proposal was made not long ago at a press conference called by Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger, State Senator Franz Leichter, and several others. Commenting on the proposal, a spokesman for Mr. Trump said that Mr. Trump wasn't interested in selling the parcel.

ALMOST thirty years from its date of conception, and after many a turbulent start and stop, Battery Park City remains a novelty in our midst. And this is a curious state of affairs—one that amounts almost to a refusal to believe that it exists. Thousands of New Yorkers who take pride in showing off such comparatively arcane architectural feats as Frank Freeman's firehouse, on Jay Street, in Brooklyn, or the façade of Peter Wight's old National Academy of Design building, now a portion of a church on West 142nd Street, in Manhattan, have yet to set foot on the winding footpaths of Battery Park City, have yet to gawk at the improbable glassy exuberance of its Winter Garden.

Early this summer, Governor Cuomo named Harry W. Albright, Jr., chairman of the Dime Savings Bank, to the board of directors of the B.P.C.A., which elected him to the chair, to succeed Fabian Palomino, who had held the office for a year and a half, and who, according to newspaper reports, had quarreled vehemently with David Emil over several aspects of the administration of the B.P.C.A. Mr. Albright, an exceptionally lively and ingratiating man of sixty-five, in his youth was a protégé of Nelson Rockefeller and has something of the late Governor's gift for irresistible salesmanship. He is determined to make Battery Park City the highly visible amenity that it deserves to be. He and Emil take seriously Cuomo's charge that Battery Park City possess soul as well as beauty, and plainly soul requires that New Yorkers as a whole—millions of New Yorkers as well as millions of tourists—acquire over the years to come an affection for the place as great as that which they feel for Central Park, Times Square, and the Statue of Liberty.

IN the midsummer sunlight, I walk along the esplanade at Battery Park City, or sit at a café table among the London plane trees in the plaza. In the marina, a few yards away, a high-masted schooner from Hamburg rides at anchor. Three or four young sailors are snapping one another's pictures against the black granite seawall. Hailing a waiter, I order a glass of Dutch beer—my equivalent, sentimentally indulged, of the old Dutch burgher's ripe peach. The gloom that even the most optimistic of New Yorkers is apt to feel after a glance at the morning's headlines begins to dissolve; uneasily at first and then with greater and greater confidence, I raise my glass and salute the windswept, glittering prospect, so deftly renewed and expanded, of the Upper Bay. —BRENDAN GILL

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MUSICAL EVENTS

Uneasy Heroine

Judith, like Jael, can seem a heroine more meritorious than lovable. Jael welcomed a weary enemy captain into her tent, refreshed him with milk and with butter in a lordly dish, and, as he lay sleeping, with "inhospitable guile" drove a nail into his temples. Judith captivated Holofernes, her people's foe, by her beauty and by deceitful speeches, and, as he lay in a drunken stupor, decapitated him: "Her sandals ravished his eyes, her beauty took his mind prisoner, and the falchion passed through his neck." Jael's deed clinches a battle. Judith's preserves a people: Holofernes, Nebuchadnezzar's great general, has subdued all the Middle East save the Jews; they alone—like Britain in 1940—resist the oppressor. Judith became a symbol of a patriotic heroine triumphant where men had failed: an earlier Joan of Arc, but one who, unlike St. Joan, employed feminine guile, wile, and witchery along with high courage—a woman who defeated the male adversary by resorting to sex appeal and crowned her craft with an unwomanly deed. She has fascinated many artists. Among her visual representations, Donatello's bronze statue is perhaps the noblest, Caravaggio's canvas the most vividly realistic. Many composers have sought to music her: a brief pass through a few reference books yielded some thirty Judith operas and about forty oratorios. The latest composer is the young American David Lang, whose marionette drama "Judith and Holofernes" was done at this year's Munich Biennale and won a BMW prize for the best piece of its kind. Since it needs only puppets (non-singing) and eight instrumentalists for its performance, an American presentation should not be long delayed. Meanwhile, the remarkable "Judith" by the East German composer Siegfried Matthus, which was first performed at the Berlin Comic Opera in 1985, has had its American première, in Santa Fe.

Hubert Parry, in the preface to his oratorio "Judith" (1888), remarks of Judith that "though her heroism is most admirable, the sanguinary catastrophe of the story is neither artistically attractive nor suitable for introduction into a work in the Oratorio form." In his version, there is no scene in Holofernes' camp: Judith embarks on her mission in one scene and in the next returns bearing the head. Metastasio in "La Betulia Liberata"—an oratorio text that was set by over thirty composers, among them Mozart, in 1771—was similarly tactful. So was Isaac Bickerstaffe in his libretto for Thomas Arne's "Judith," a Palladian score animated by florid, melodious arias. But Vivaldi's "Juditha Triumphans" (1716), a "sacred and military oratorio for these times of war, to be sung by a chorus of harp-playing maidens" (and one of his most splendid compositions), includes a love scene for Judith and Holofernes, and also, in accompanied recitative, the murder.

Most Judith operas follow the Apocryphal story, more or less. The tally of them includes Achille Peri's "Giuditta," which was produced at La Scala in 1860 and reached the New York Academy three years later; George Whitefield Chadwick's solid-looking "Judith," which was performed at the Worcester Festival in 1901 (David Bispham the Holofernes); Honegger's "Judith," a lean, elegant composition, which was produced at Monte Carlo in 1926 and reached Chicago and Boston (with Mary Garden) the following year; and Eugene Goossens' "Judith," a fluently sub-Strauss opera, which both Covent Garden (with Göta Ljungberg) and the Philadelphia Academy staged in 1929. Most Judith operas place the murder offstage; Chadwick's, an exception, calls for a two-handed, threefold swipe, and "at the third stroke the head rolls away." (The Worcester première, however, was given in concert form.) And most of them end with acclaim for the heroine. But there is another strand of Judith operas, in which the patriotic triumph is subordinated to personal tragedy. These works derive from Friedrich Hebbel's play "Judith" (1840). The earliest I have traced is by August Klughardt; others are by Max Ettinger, by Emil von Rezniček (a "Holofernes" dedicated to Michael Bohnen), by Natanael Berg, and, the most recent, by Matthus.

Hebbel has been called a precursor of Ibsen and Strindberg. In an 1843 essay (which appeared shortly before his "Genoveva," the main source of Schumann's opera) he defined his intention of uniting in balance three different kinds of drama that his contemporaries had taken up—social, historical, and "philosophical"—and creating thereby a fourth kind of drama. "Judith" was his first play. He thought initially of writing a new "Maid of Orleans," since the heroine of Schiller's "Maid," he said in a letter,

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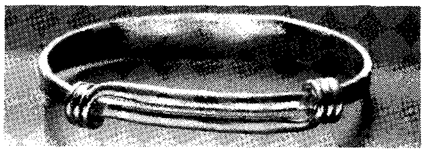

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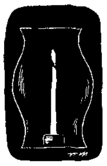
“belongs in a waxwork museum”; one gloomy November morning, in the *Munich Pinakothek*, he saw a picture —once ascribed to Giulio Romano, later to Domenichino—that turned his thoughts from Joan to Judith. In letters and diaries he described his aims. Although Judith and Holofernes are individuals, they are also representatives: she “the dizzying pinnacle of Judaism, of that people which believed it had a personal relationship with the Deity,” and he of bold, speculative thought about godhead's subsisting in, created by, human endeavor, “born from a human womb.” When Hebbel's Holofernes learns that his monarch, Nebuchadnezzar, has proclaimed himself sole God, he is at once struck by the grand idea and indignant at the insufficiency of its instigator. A conflict between belief in, and obedience to, a Higher Judge and proud assertion that men and women are their own arbiters —polarized in Judith and Holofernes but complicated by their inner uncertainties—runs through the work. So does male-female opposition, with many attempts at defining essential qualities and differences. “Judith” is a thoughtful and interesting play. A modern revival, in which the dramatic explorations of religion, nationalism, and feminism could be followed more closely than in an operatic treatment, is overdue. On the lyric stage, simplification becomes inevitable.

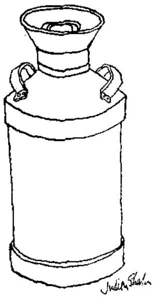
In an 1840 diary entry Hebbel wrote, “I can't use the Judith of the Bible. That Judith is a widow who lures Holofernes into her net with her trickery and cunning: she is happy to have his head in her sack and sings and expresses her jubilation with all of Israel for three months. That is mean: such a character is not worthy of success. Acts of this sort may successfully be committed by an enthusiasm which later feels its punishment within, but not by a deceitful nature which sees merit in good luck. My Judith is paralyzed by her deed. . . . It becomes clear to her that she has exceeded her limits, that, at the very least, she has done what is right for the wrong reasons.” Hebbel's Judith is a virgin (as not in the Apocrypha) until (as not in the Apocrypha) she is raped by Holofernes. Hebbel also wrote, “The kind of courage which is ready to confront the most monstrous man can only emanate from the soul of a virgin: this is grounded in conviction in the human mind, is congruent with universal faith, is attested to by history.”

In a long speech his Judith tells the audience how on her bridal night—she was not yet fourteen—her husband, Manasses, stayed by some mysterious force, fell to his knees and dared not approach her, even though she invited him. In beleaguered Bethulia, when, stirred by the accounts of Holofernes, she reaches her decision after long prayer, she cries, “The path to my deed lies through sinning. I thank thee, Lord!” After the rape, she comes from Holofernes' tent to declare that a virgin's moment of greatest triumph is the moment when she is no longer a virgin —and reënters the tent to kill her ravisher. For at least three reasons, Hebbel's Judith feels guilt: she has been sexually aroused by Holofernes (rather as Donna Anna, in Hoffmann's reading of Mozart's opera, is by Don Giovanni); she has killed him not as her country's foe but as her own personal violator; and she has behaved in an unwomanly way. Like the heroine of Jean Giraudoux's clever “Judith” (1931), she has done the necessary, pious, patriotic deed “for the wrong reasons.” As a consequence, she becomes not the revered dame, living on to a hundred and five, of the Apocrypha but a suicidal neurotic. Hebbel's play is, in his own words, “brought to an end by emotion and confusion of the senses.” Judith rejects the acclaim of her people and exacts from the elders and priests a promise that they will kill her should she wish it; she cannot bear to think that she may be bearing Holofernes' son. (Yet it is tempting to contemplate a sequel in which that son, offspring of two great spirits, becomes a reconciling avatar.) The closing lines are “I pray God that my womb may be unfruitful. Perhaps He will be merciful to me!”



Composers have sought to make Hebbel's ending more specific. Rezniček's Judith stabs herself. In Matthus's version, Ephraim, a young Jew in love with her, cries “Hail, whore of Judah,” rips off her clothes, and “does violence to her.” And during a final passacaglia—a tense, potent setting of desperate verses from Psalm 69, “Save me, O God: for the waters are come in, even to my soul”—there is, according to the score, a “pantomimic presentation of Judith's destruction, with all the personages of the drama taking part, employing the previously enacted and reported events in an unrealistic time and sense synthesis."

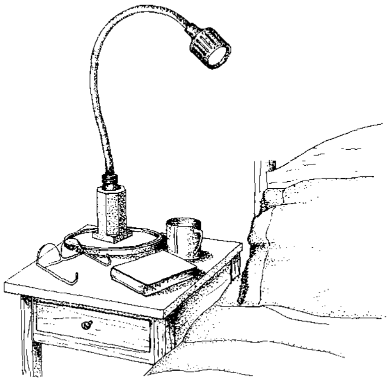
At a Santa Fe press conference, Matthus declared that he merely wrote his music, and left it to directors to find stage imagery (thereby differing from Wagner, Verdi, Berg, who tended to visualize stage action while they composed). David Alden, the director of the Santa Fe "Judith," furnished the passacaglia with a public invitation to Judith to commit suicide, which she accepts, and an incineration with military honors. It was one of his more sober contributions. Much of the rest was fouled by the automatic violence that on the contemporary stage often turns high tragedy into cheap sensationalism: children having their throats cut, buckets of realistic blood, corpses hanging from butchers' hooks on the walls of the officers' mess. And other all-purpose clichés of "modern" production were on show: truckle bed, naked light bulb, Brechtian little black dresses for the women, much business with chairs, principals dropping to their knees when they had something important to say. Holofernes was sung with force and intelligence by the veteran Victor Braun, but he was got up as an elderly hippie, in breeches and singlet, gray locks streaming, chest medals dangling: far from the irresistible conqueror who distracts Judith from her sacred mission. The Judith, Stephanie Sundine, was admirable. Tall, slender, a good actress, she evidently understood the subtleties of her role. Her voice, like the voices of many American sopranos, has a patch around the top of the staff where under pressure it becomes impure and ugly, but below it she was sure, and above it she rose to B's and C's—in Judith's lines Matthus uses sustained high notes motivically—that were full and steady. She merited a production more worthily focussed on the heroine, less lavishly larded with distraction.



Judith Christin sang an aria for Mirza, Judith's handmaiden—a lovely, Bergian episode—with exquisite art. Smaller roles were well taken by Mark Thomsen (Daniel), Jan Opalach (Ammon, Daniel's brother), Richard Lewis (Bagoas, Holofernes' majordomo), Michael Krueger (Achior), and John Kuether (Hosea). Mark Baker, the Ephraim, tended to bellow—to good effect at the moments when bellowing was apt. Richard Bradshaw conducted, with disciplined passion; his flair for inspiring singers and players to each new heights was in evidence.

Matthus's "Judith" has been extensively performed and has been recorded. Although it may, in time, join the long list of all-but-forgotten Judith operas, it proved well worth performing today. Not every new opera can be a masterpiece. This one was dramatically eventful, always interesting, and often emotionally powerful. Matthus composes with unconventionally gapped octatonic scales of his own devising that permit much effective tonal reference. He is a master of the orchestra, with an especial command of telling percussion timbres. Sometimes his vocal lines struck patches of drabness—but this may have been the fault, partly, of singers unversed in bringing words to life (the piece was sung in an English translation by Bernard Jacobson) and, partly, of the text-consuming open-air acoustics. Matthus's other 1985 opera, "The Lay of Cornet Christoph Rilke's Love and Death," is more consistently lyrical. (A production is due in December at the Manhattan School.) The main trouble with "Judith," I think, may lie in its being in some ways too faithful and in other ways not faithful enough to Hebbel. The composer, his own librettist, has not thinned the dense issues of the play (as, for example, Rezniček did), but he has left much imperfectly explained. He provides texts for the important choral contributions; the rest is mainly Hebbel abridged—to a point where what is left of, say, Judith's account of her strange bridal night or Holofernes' of his lioness-reared infancy is so summary as to be puzzling and ineffective. Moreover, Matthus has freely rearranged the text and has "intercut": monologues for Judith and for Holofernes, distinct in the original, proceed simultaneously, as "duets" with one singer in Bethulia and the other in the beleaguering camp. The result is musically striking and theatrically strong but verbally near-unintelligible. Reading the libretto in advance helps, but not enough; one needs to have read the play.

—ANDREW PORTER



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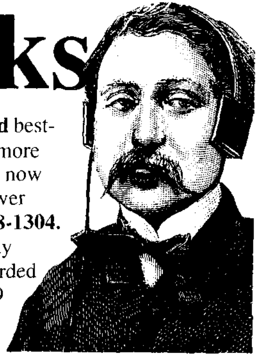

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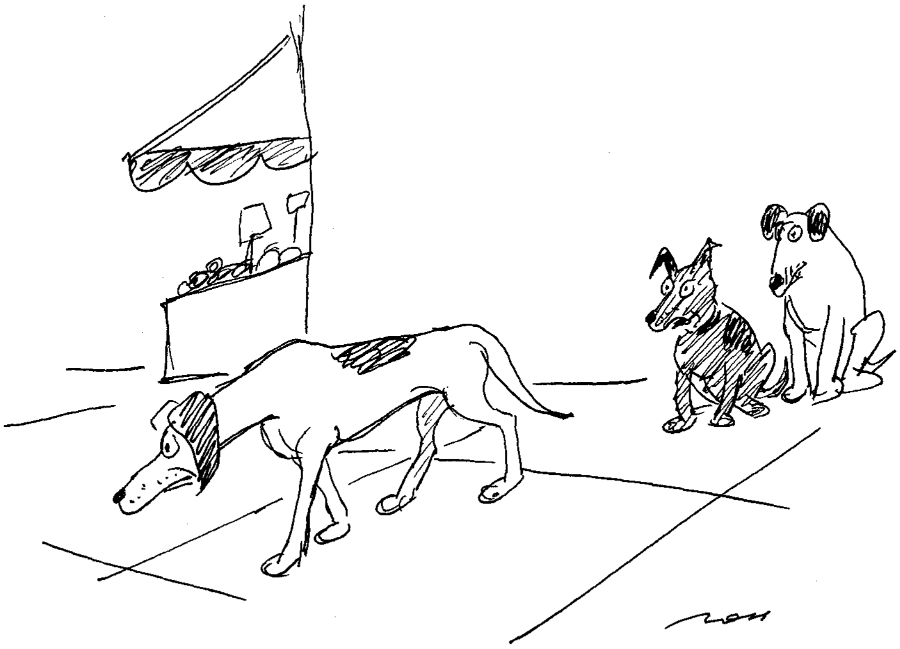
Maenads

DANCING boasts an ageless tradition of undermining the intellect. That is its power. Among the earliest dancing bodies discernible in time is the maenad, celebrant in the Dionysian cults of ecstasy. If dance was the great preliterate form of theatre, in our own era it has come full circle. Today's notions of artistic purity rest on the airy romantic premise that words give out where music begins, that language cedes its power in deference to music, because *music* is the more articulate, the more profound. Dance, the consort of music, has grown up in the shadow of this mystery. As the art with the least relation to the descriptive or denotative power of words—there is no operatic form of dance—dance has been, even more than music, the art that words fail.

It is no wonder that so many choreographers and dancers have looked on words as either suspect or futile. This lack of a grasping or commemorating language has meant, too, a lack of memory. Until fairly recent developments in the use of notation, and then the invention of videotape, dance evolved much as it had for the pre-Homeric maenad, passed on from body to body. Change was a part of survival, when survival was valued at all. Confident of creating itself anew from day to day, the most heedless art absorbed just what was needed to go on, and allowed the rest to slip into oblivion.

The history of dance has been largely assembled, unwittingly, by critics caught up in the moment of performance: Théophile Gautier, André Levinson, Edwin Denby, Arlene Croce. Their essays and reviews are the nearest that dance comes to having invaluable texts, since they must stand in for so much that has vanished, but they were not designed to have the structure or the authority of history. Dance has had no Vasari. To approach anything like that kind of omniscient and objectified passion we must come down to our own time—to the colossal overviews of Lincoln Kirstein, at once systematic, principled, and in the thick of it. Important lesser figures, such as Ivor Guest and Lillian Moore and Keith Money, to name just those writing in English, staked out areas of research and tilled them fastidiously. But they are exceptions. The New York Public Library's frequent advertisement for its performing-arts collections shows three fledgling ballerinas lightly overstepping a written claim to some thirty-seven thousand books on dance. Whatever is in all those books? Shake them out and you would accumulate one small mound of method, one alpine peak of gossip, and, running between, a meandering stream of metaphysics. This is the long-familiar landscape of dance history.

That landscape shows signs of changing now, as dance, one of the oldest of the arts, inches toward the hallowed halls of American academe. Even movies preceded it, turning into Film Studies decades ago. Like American movies, American dance is a native development that has had worldwide impact, but its cultural vitality has barely begun to register on the circumscribed curricula of higher education. At schools whose educational objectives include the training of dancers, the study of dance history is nothing new, but it is still generally taken up by the art's future practitioners. At other major liberal-arts institutions, the infant discipline is to be found on almost any doorstep: an odd course in an English Department here, a Music Department there. At Yale this past spring, students earned credits in Slavic studies for taking Choreography by George Balanchine, and there was an overflow enrollment. Such offerings are sporadic, dependent on the knowledge and the will of individual faculty members; they represent no commitment on the part of the universities. Yet academic interest is clearly rising within a generation that has grown up comfortable in the achievements of the art. It is ironic, perhaps, that this should happen at a time of creative standstill in the theatres, but then that may be the very reason: all the energies stirred up by the marvels of the last half century have to go somewhere. Papers are being written, and masters' theses, and doctoral dissertations. As with the establishment, in the early years of this century, of art history as an accredited humanist pursuit in the United States, an avocation is on its way to becoming a profession. And, as with art history, the process will force radical changes within the subject itself, way beyond the classroom. The far-reaching effect of this kind of activity is to be observed in new and publicly available research and analysis—that is to say, in published scholarship, with its power to codify and enunciate a record that the art itself can and will subsume and pass on.



"It's a shame. He's lost the will to fetch."

For these reasons, it is significant

vhen Oxford University Press issues a at new book, based on an American lissertation, that claims to employ the lew scholarship in dance. "Diaghilev's 3allets Russes" (Oxford; $29.95), by ynn Garafola, makes an obvious itle for a distinguished publisher: the nyth and glamour of those years of 'Schéhérazade" and "The Rite of ipring" have never left us. The linked uccession of names remains a kind of nantra of European high culture and lelight: Nijinsky, Bakst, Cocteau, itravinsky, Picasso. Despite all that has een written about the arrival and triumph in Western Europe of this brilliant offshoot of the Russian ballet, led y the impresario Sergei Diaghilev, it s a subject ready for new thought. The heer obstructive dazzle of the myth nd glamour has left the epoch suspended as if outside history—a great ilded fable. There is a need for just he kind of correctively pragmatic, dispassionate scholarship that is the legitimate goal of a burgeoning academy. Garafola, whose work originated in the Comparative Literature Department of he City University of New York, neans to address this need. She announces at the outset her determination o dig straight down to the hard, dayo-day facts of the Ballets Russes, and o locate them in the context of their ime: the early decades of this century. Dividing her text into sections with the o-nonsense titles of "Art," "Enterprise," and "Audience," she asserts hat she is "the first to look at the ompany as a totality."

That she does not achieve this goal, nd that the real contribution of her ook turns out to be narrowly focussed, nd partial, is understandable and ot especially damaging. A modern lissertation—even one between hard overs—is by its nature not designed to leal with a "totality"; it is an attempt o look closely at one area and fill in aps. Garafola has done painstaking esearch into the finances of the Ballets Russes, and she reports on salaries, percentages, contract details, and just how the company survived from year o year. She has set her course, not nwisely, against the methods and conclusions of her predecessors—those delimiters of a goodly tract of the old landscape, here identified as "the British school of Ballets Russes history"—and particularly against "England's leading Diaghilev expert," Richard Buckle. Buckle's twin biographies of

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A d v e r t i s e m e n t

Nijinsky and Diaghilev have been and remain the major introductory sources in the field, but this is not to say that they are fully satisfactory or would serve as such in a field more thoroughly developed. As Gide sighed "*Hélas*, Hugo" when acknowledging the poet's preëminence, the sentiment around the card catalogue has long been a grudging "*Hélas*, Buckle."

Buckle's volumes on this period are solidly researched, clearly written, and rather witty. Their chief defect is a consistently fluty tone devoted to a cast of characters overweighted with the well-born and the well-heeled. Great works of art get passed over; great ladies do not. We are introduced to the occupants of Misia's box at the opera and of Massine's bed above a cheap café; we lunch, whenever possible, *chez* Prunier. The real subject can pass us by in a blurred *Who's Who* of the Ritz set as Buckle draws out all the peripheral connections. It is possible to benefit from his work and to enjoy it, while recognizing its limitations: to be quite glad to learn that the sisters of the English translator of Proust's final volume entertained Diaghilev and his dancers both in London and in the South of France, while not confusing such elevated scuttlebutt with a central event in Ballets Russes history.

An American scholar embarking on a career and aiming at high seriousness might well find this gossipy approach antiquated, and even absurd. What new scholarship does not claim to overthrow the old? Why else produce it? In perfect contrast to Buckle—and with no lack of tart asides about "historical chitchat" and "society palaver"—Garafola constructs a moralizing and politicizing model, based on economic considerations. Her story is designed to include the unsung and the underpaid, and to emphasize broad social currents above individual personalities. This view into the substructure is the most popular one in every field of history right now, and there is no reason that it cannot be turned toward the milieu of dance. But what of the art—the dance itself—that made us care about the milieu in the first place?

REVOLUTION is where Garafola begins: with the St. Petersburg general strikes of 1905. Political revolution equated with artistic modernism is her standard gauge of achievement—and of failure—in all that follows. The necessary distortions begin immediately. We are meant to understand that these strikes, which spread to the young dancers of the Imperial Ballet School, were the crucible from which emerged both Diaghilev's company and the innovative approach of its first choreographer, Michel Fokine. Of the dozen strike delegates sent to negotiate with management, Garafola writes, "no fewer than three—Michel Fokine and ballerinas Anna Pavlova and Tamara Karsavina—were future Diaghilev stars." Now, while Anna Pavlova took part in Diaghilev's early seasons, she was by no means an integral part of the company, and she was certainly not a "Diaghilev star": Pavlova was her own star, both at the Imperial Ballet well before Diaghilev's company was got up and with her own touring group, which set out for Europe independently of Diaghilev's and in many ways competed with his. And her troupe presented a far more traditional and established repertory—the repertory in which she excelled. The point here is not to reduce Garafola's number from three to two but to emphasize distinctions between politics and art. Pavlova was a committed artistic conservative willing to use whatever brash and innovative means might be at hand to gain her point. In 1905, the means, as everywhere in St. Petersburg, was a strike. The ballerina believed strongly in the rights of the dancers she represented, and put herself on the line for demands ranging from an extra day off and a mutual-benefit fund to the addition of courses in the humanities—including the history of dance—to the school curriculum. The most important of the demands, however, for her as for most of the striking dancers—and it was hardly a revolutionary one—was the return of Marius Petipa to the leadership of the Imperial Ballet.

Petipa, the Frenchman who brought Russian ballet to glory in the late nineteenth century, with works like "The Nutcracker" and "The Sleeping Beauty," had been ignominiously dismissed in 1903, following the failure of a particularly muddled extravaganza, which tolled the death of the conventions of grand ballet. There being as yet nothing to replace these conventions, the dancers were left creatively adrift, and they clearly saw no contradiction in using the "revolutionary" gesture of a strike to demand a return to continuity with a beloved creative past.

Fokine's choreography was what came to replace the grand ballet, to show a way out. Influenced by a combination of new forces, including Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theatre and Isadora Duncan, Fokine was a cleanser rather than a destroyer of the old ways. He wanted stiffness and self-conscious technical virtuosity to yield to pliancy and character, and the ahistorical stylizations of the Imperial Ballet—in which a bit of key pattern decorating the border of a tutu might signify a "Greek" character—to yield to authentic historical identifications. He proclaimed his ideas in a memorandum attached to a ballet scenario for a "Greek" work of his own, submitted to the director of the Imperial Theatres in 1904—one inconvenient year too soon for Garafola's thesis but, as she would have it, "on the very eve of the Revolution." Fokine's overriding intention was to humanize ballet, and one of the most human things about his early works—so we gather as we read about them, for the works themselves are long forgotten—is how easily he ignored his own precepts when it came time for the show to go on. He was an artist, not a theoretician. But Garafola fails to allow him this leeway, and rarely acknowledges the difference.

Of Fokine's first big commission, in 1906, a genre balletic bacchanal called "La Vigne," Garafola solemnly reports that the various "Maryinsky dissidents" were called on to play "the wines in the tippling scene," as if this type of giddy fantasy were not typical of the late Petipa inventions. (Petipa went to see the new work and admired it.) One of the dancers was Marie Petipa, whose "rousing czardas as the spirit of Hungarian wine" is taken by Garafola to reflect the choreographer's revitalization of the "living vein" of languishing folk dialects, "a form independent of the academy and identified exclusively with national and ethnic styles of movement." We know, however, from the memoirs of Alexandre Benois (among other sources, of which Garafola is certainly aware), that the earthbound Marie, who as the daughter of Marius was anything but a "dissident," could not stay up on her toes, and had specialized in just such dances as the mazurka and the czardas—presumably always rousing—in many of the Imperial classics mounted by her father. Benois mentions falling in love with her in the czardas in "Coppélia." Fokine was simply letting the dancer do what she did best, and neither revolution nor the truth about Tokay had much to do with it.

Garafola's insistence on political content in ballets takes a flying leap in her discussion of "Schéhérazade," the 1910 spectacle with which Fokine, and Bakst and Nijinsky, seduced the European imagination. The provocative sequence of images is legendary: Nijinsky as the dangerous, carnal Golden Slave uncaged and turned loose into a covey of other slaves and odalisques, all consorting freely on cushions; the entire group rising to circle the stage in an accelerating, whirling frenzy of mounting passion, which climaxes with the entrance—the stage freezes—of the cuckolded Sultan, scimitar raised. This and the concluding slaughter were the ravishment of ravishable Paris. If only the Parisians had known what Garafola knows, they would never have gone out and bought all those feathered turbans. The true subtext of the big scene, she informs us, is "the paroxysm of revolution itself: the fury of masses unchained, the ecstasy of blood, the triumph of instinct over ego, the liberation of the self through collective action"—all this reflecting "the legacy of 1905." And Fokine's "Firebird," it turns out, is about exactly the same thing—"the very drama of 1905." This is not interpretation; it is force-feeding. Moreover, only Garafola is allowed to be nourished by the moral uplift of it all. Later in her book, she condescends both to the snobbish audience of London and to what she portrays as the ostentatious tastes of the Paris audience, precisely for responding to "the voluptuous thrills of *Schéhérazade*," which at that point in her text is included among the pandering and cynical frivolities of Diaghilev's early repertory.

It is important to note the arc of Fokine's career and the meanings accorded it here. By 1912, the rebellious artist was declining into formula exoticism, and Garafola ascribes the decline to the demands of the "sensation-loving public," which left the choreographer "neither room nor reason to grow." Garafola's assumption that such room and reason are social and exterior rather than individual and interior is characteristic of her approach. No such consideration for the audience's intellectual pygmyism kept Diaghilev from putting on Nijinsky's "The Rite of Spring" the next year, after Fokine returned to St. Petersburg. In 1918, following other movements around Europe, and then the war, Fokine deserted impoverished Soviet Russia for the United States, where, Garafola writes, "titans of popular entertainment dangled pots of gold," and where he exercised what was left of his corrupted talent beneath the notice of history.

Of Fokine's more than eighty ballets, choreographed between his St. Petersburg beginnings and his death in New York, in 1942, barely a handful survive, and of these only two, "Les Sylphides" and "Petrushka," are repertory standards. Garafola suggests that the disappearance of so many works may be a consequence of the choreographer's virtues—his exceptional sensitivity to dancers' personalities, and the collaborative nature of his early method—and that much of what has been attributed to Pavlova or Nijinsky may actually be Fokine. In reality, what we know of these legendary dancers, and of the freely interpolative attitude toward choreography in general in those years, tends to indicate just the opposite: that it was these performers' unique abilities to fill out roles like the Dying Swan and the Spectre de la Rose that made Fokine's ballets live in the contemporary imagination, as they have not lived since. Neither Pavlova nor Nijinsky suffered in a non-Fokine repertory. But no resolution of who gave what to whom will affect the fact that even the most highly regarded of Fokine's works still performed today leave us with a sense that something has been lost.

Another reason for Fokine's disappearance, according to Garafola, is the poor quality of today's revivals, "few of which do honor to the style or spirit of their originals." But just how do we know that style and spirit? The "originals" are not before us; we, like Garafola, can only compare one revival with another. And is the failure of

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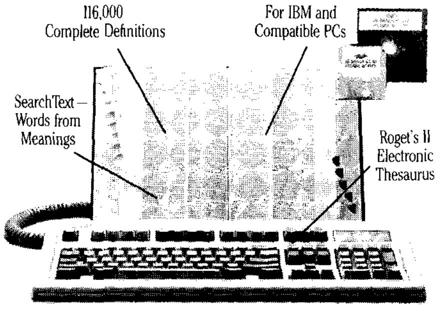
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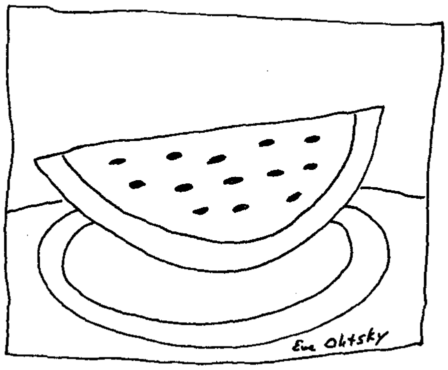
these revivals attributable to deficient presentation alone, or is the audience itself unable to see as earlier audiences saw? Are these works merely victims of changing tastes? Something like this is implied in Garafola's final explanation for Fokine's absence from our stages, although she conceives his disappearance not as a naturally evolving process but as a deliberate manipulation by admirers of Balanchine. Balanchine's "emphasis on steps, his de-emphasis of acting, his preference for plotless as opposed to narrative forms," she says, have edged out Fokine's very different aesthetic. Fokine's neglect "also reflects—and not well—on those who in their zeal to crown Balanchine with the mantle of Petipa have wiped two decades from the history of twentieth-century ballet."

That is quite a charge. Does such a cabal exist? Could it have had the effect on Fokine's reputation which Garafola suggests? There is a tone of vengeance here, but the author doesn't specify her exact target. Kirstein? Denby? Croce? The erosion of Fokine's body of work through the impersonal, gutting force of public and professional neglect preceded the activity of any of these writers. Today's broad audience consensus in favor of Balanchine's art, won slowly over long years and tutored by the works themselves, has only recently come to resemble the assured judgment of posterity. It is with the accumulated experience of several generations that Garafola must make her argument.

In a letter to his mother written in 1912, Stravinsky expressed alarm that Fokine was scheduled to supply the choreography for his new "Rite of Spring": "The unpleasant part is that it will have to be done by Fokine, whom I consider an exhausted artist, one who has travelled his road quickly and who writes himself out with each new work. *Schéhérazade* was the high point of his achievement and, consequently, the beginning of his decline. . . . New forms must be created, and the evil, the gifted, the greedy Fokine has not even dreamed of them." This is clearly a cry from the heart of the thirty-year-old composer, embarking on his greatest adventure. In contrast to Garafola, Stravinsky places the burden of Fokine's artistic exhaustion squarely on the shoulders of the artist. Later on, for the record, in one of the books of dialogue with Robert Craft, Stravinsky spoke of Fokine with a mixture of respect and dislike: "In spite of his wearying homiletics, repeated at each meeting, on the role of music as *accompaniment* to dance, Fokine taught me much and I have worked with choreographers in the same way ever since." The stress on the word "accompaniment" is Stravinsky's, and in it may lie the fundamental difference between our concept of dance and that of an earlier era.

If we feel today that dance becomes more itself the better it listens, that is indeed our lesson from Balanchine. But it was not Petipa alone whom Balanchine followed in this; it was the Fokine of "Les Sylphides." Most of Fokine's work is not only lost; it has no issue—with this one vital exception. The lasting aspect of Fokine's reform lies here, in the first "plotless" ballet, in its sweeping ensemble, and in the waltz that Fokine made for Pavlova and Oboukhov—unshowy, and absorbed within its music. Balanchine knew "Les Sylphides" (or "Chopiniana," its pre-Diaghilev title) in Russia; he was the *maître de ballet* of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo when it was mounted there in 1932; and he clearly paid tribute to it in the first work he made in America, two years later—"Serenade." Perhaps this was his way of introducing himself to the older master. In its mystery-laden atmosphere, its corps formations opening and dissolving upon its soloists, even in a key step from the waltz, "Serenade"—the very signature of new American dancing—deliberately and openly recalled Fokine. Parts of Balanchine's great work look like "Les Sylphides" with the windows thrown wide: what was small and confined and precious is now open, charged, flying. Fokine's subject, the romantic ballet, has become romance itself, ballet itself. In 1972, thirty-eight years after "Serenade," Balanchine had Alexandra Danilova mount "Chopiniana" for New York City Ballet, costumed in practice clothes and set to a de-orchestrated piano score. In stripping the work of its gauze-and-lamplight atmosphere, he and Kirstein intended a revelation of its underlying architectural integrity, and of its continuity with their own company's repertory. It is particularly ironic that Garafola, in her displeasure, places blame for the disappearance of Fokine directly upon his only visible line of succession.



IT soon becomes clear that Garafola's program of evaluations and accusations amounts to a carryover to the ballet world of the most common politicized argument taking place in academe today: the revision of the canon. Why is it *these* works we watch, study, revere? In the wide field of world literature, those who seek to redress a history of apparent domination by privilege may add minority or non-Western works to the list of "great books." Garafola's domain is not the comparably wide-ranging world of dance but the insular and highly cultivated one of Western toe dancing, in which such an option does not exist. She labors hard over this mismatch of model and material. For Garafola it is the Russian classical ballet, both "Imperial and imperialist," that plays the role of the oppressor. Those artists who form Diaghilev's "secession"—Fokine, Nijinsky, Nijinska—are valued precisely for the degree to which they revolt against the inherently aristocratic forms of the academy. They are turned into revolutionaries at any cost; they become a kind of manufactured counterculture. The approved choreographers must be exemplars of the author's own social and cultural attitudes. They and their works must be politically correct (and so the influence of Italian Futurism, with its manifestos of modish anarchy, is treated at unnecessary and bewildering length), and that correctness emphatically includes sexual politics.

In Nijinsky she has a real and ready-made hero. Because he was a natural iconoclast, something of a genius, sexually ambiguous, and a martyr, his works repel her ideological interventions far less than Fokine's do. Nearly the same can be said of Bronislava Nijinska, whose martyrdom lay not in madness but in being a woman. Garafola subjects the works of brother and sister to elaborate psychosexual analysis. In writings on Nijinsky, this is an old tradition: the idea that his ballets reflect a degree of erotic autobiography dates back to his own diary of 1919 ("I am the Faune"), written at the time of his mental disintegration. Still, Garafola's treatment of these shaped works of art as helplessly confessional case histories is presumptuous and overwrought to the point of parody. The interrupted flirtation at the end of the ballet "Jeux," for example, reveals—well, what else?—Nijinsky's "aversion to intercourse itself."

Projecting her own contemporary standards onto this history, Garafola goes as far as to identify the central dramatic event of "The Rite of Spring," the sacrifice of a virgin girl to a merciless god, as a creation and reflection of "twentieth century male sexual anxiety." (Specifically, Stravinsky's, since she credits him with the scenario—as he credited himself—despite indications that the painter Nicholas Roerich may have been responsible.) Never before in "ancient tale" or "Slavonic lore," she asserts, had such a theme existed. But what of Iphigenia, Western culture's very symbol of living sacrifice? Any primer on mythology or early religion could have disabused Garafola. So could a reading of recent scholarship, by the musicologist Richard Taruskin, on precedents for the story in Russian folk tales—and she quotes Taruskin appreciatively elsewhere, albeit on the basis of one article printed in a dance journal.

Even so, Garafola's feminist approach to Nijinska encompasses her most sensitive and sympathetic moments of observation. Her portrait is frequently convincing, and even touching, as in the comment "Only a plain woman could have made *Les Biches*." But this approach, too, becomes overdrawn and overemphatic, and Garafola's insistently female partisanship finally achieves the dubious object of cutting Nijinska's humanity in half. In Nijinska's own descriptions of the ritualized peasant wedding of her ballet "Les Noces" (and in the ballet itself) she expressed compassion for the plight of both the bride and the groom, equally young and frightened and unknowing. It is reductive—it lessens Nijinska—for Garafola to vulgarize this wide sympathy into a drama "of male power and female pain."

The element uniting Nijinsky's "Rite" and Nijinska's "Les Noces,"

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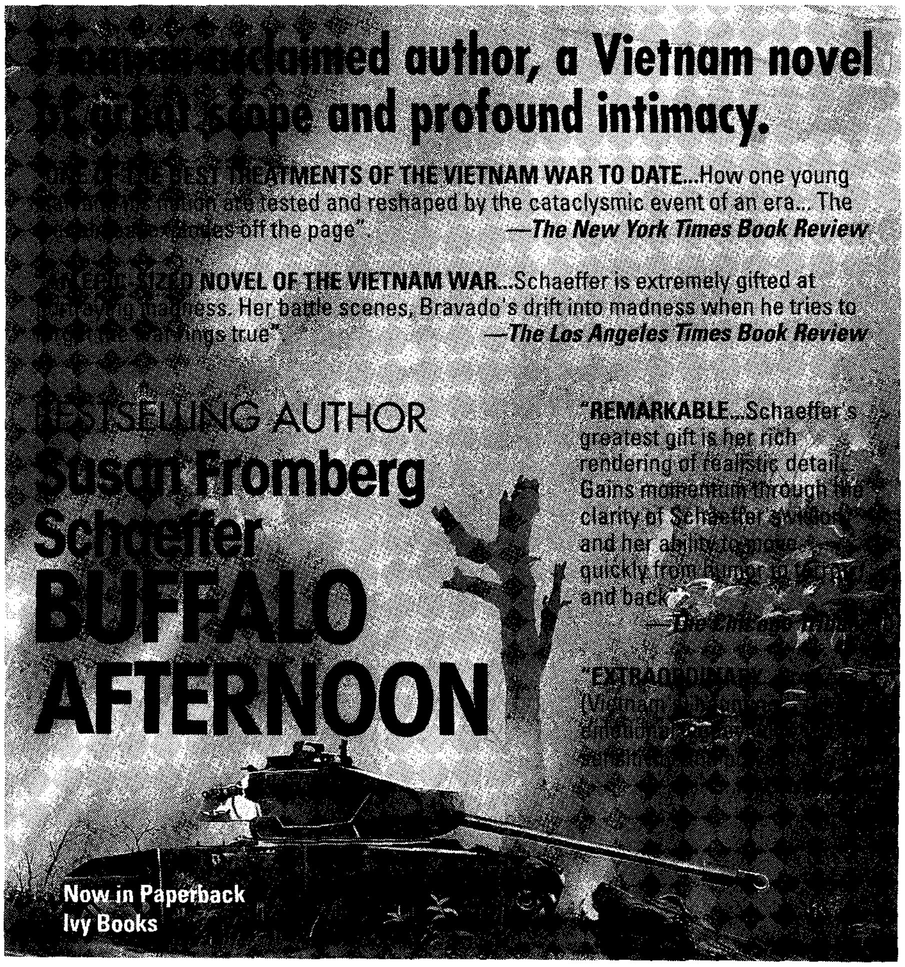

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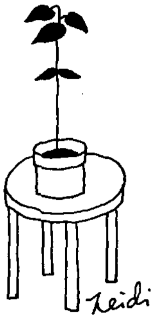
those bombs set off amid the red plush ten years apart, is not common blood but Stravinsky's two scores, of cataclysmic, incantatory power. The ceremonial drama, the cruel primitivism, the unsentimental, harsh beauty—these are Stravinsky's impositions. The music is the challenge to which the choreographers had to rise, the promise that they had to keep. But there is small place for music in Garafola's design. Her discussion of "Les Noces" could easily leave one with the idea that its subject and its scheme originated with the choreographer. Stravinsky is mentioned only in a single quotation from Nijinska, and the wholly distinctive, liturgical character of the music is not mentioned at all. Admittedly, in a system in which works of art are justified by the ideas they can be said to contain and the ideologies they can be said to support, music is not very relevant.

This irrelevance is one reason that Garafola has so little, finally, to say about Balanchine, particularly about the most characteristic and enduring aspect of his work: the relationship of movement to music. "Apollon Musagète" (now "Apollo"), created for Diaghilev's company in 1928, is treated less as a work of theatre than as a symbol of artistic and political retrogression. Garafola describes the original painted sets and the costumes in a valid attempt to link the work with its era, but not a single step or choreographic image is recalled to indicate the nature of the ballet's living presence. Her discussion centers on a notion of restored "social order and religious orthodoxy," although how these concepts relate to events onstage is not made clear.



"Apollo" is listed by Garafola as among the three masterpieces produced by the Ballets Russes during the nineteen-twenties. So is Balanchine's "Prodigal Son," set to a Prokofiev score in the following year, during the company's final season. ("Les Noces" is the third.) "Prodigal Son" is a dramatic ballet, with a carefully told story and passionate human characters. Any consideration of its qualities, so different from those of "Apollo," could only broaden one's view of the choreographer responsible for both works. But Garafola does not consider "Prodigal Son." Masterpiece or not, it is granted only three sentences to itself, and this in a book of nearly four hundred pages.

Balanchine is placed in a difficult position. As a modernist, he is made responsible for the burial of Fokine, and, as a conservative, for the burial of modernism. Never does Garafola espy the continuity of the goal: the body's ever purer expressiveness, unimpeded, and independent of all but the delivering force of music. She confuses Balanchine's language, the classical dance, with some of the things it has been used to say and, therefore, with all it is capable of saying. She gives a nod toward the restoration of "radical content" in Balanchine's "leotard" ballets of the nineteen-forties and fifties, but what is a strict systematizer to do, after all, about someone who tied the knots in Stravinsky's "Agon" and the bows on John Philip Sousa's "Stars and Stripes" with virtually the same sweep of a hand?

This readjustment of history presents Garafola with two main problems. The first, which she shares with revisionists in other fields, is that we are dealing with works of art, not treatises. Even if her occluded vision of Balanchine were acceptable, the fact is that we do not need to approve of his works; we simply need to have them. Garafola's second problem is unique to dance: because history happened the way it did, and because this art has so short a memory, many of the works central to her polemic do not exist anymore.

Of the four ballets made by Nijinsky during his brief career, "Jeux" and "Tyl Eulenspiegel" did not survive their first season and are known through a small number of photographs and a larger number of not very specific words. "Afternoon of a Faun" is secure in the world's repertories, although it presents irresolvable questions of style. "The Rite of Spring," which has been no more than a legend since its birth and expiration in 1913, is known today in a controversial 1987 reconstruction. "Reconstruction" is the standard term in dance for a work that has been off the stage so long that everyone originally involved in its creation has died or largely forgotten it, so that it must be put together as a mosaic of memory fragments, notated scores, and old sketches, all connected as suitably as possible "in the manner of." (Is there anywhere a scholar or critic who would agree to be known by his or her work so "reconstructed"?) Such a "reconstruction" is to be distinguished from a "revival"—the term generally used for Fokine's ballets—which indicates that a work has been off the stage for a comparatively short time and can, presumably, be put back together whole, from living memory and continuous tradition. The very word "revival" carries built-in assumptions about life and identity. Lazarus was revived, but that was a miracle, and, in any case, he had been dead only four days. For the reconstructed—but unrevived—"Rite of Spring," the gap was seventy-four years.

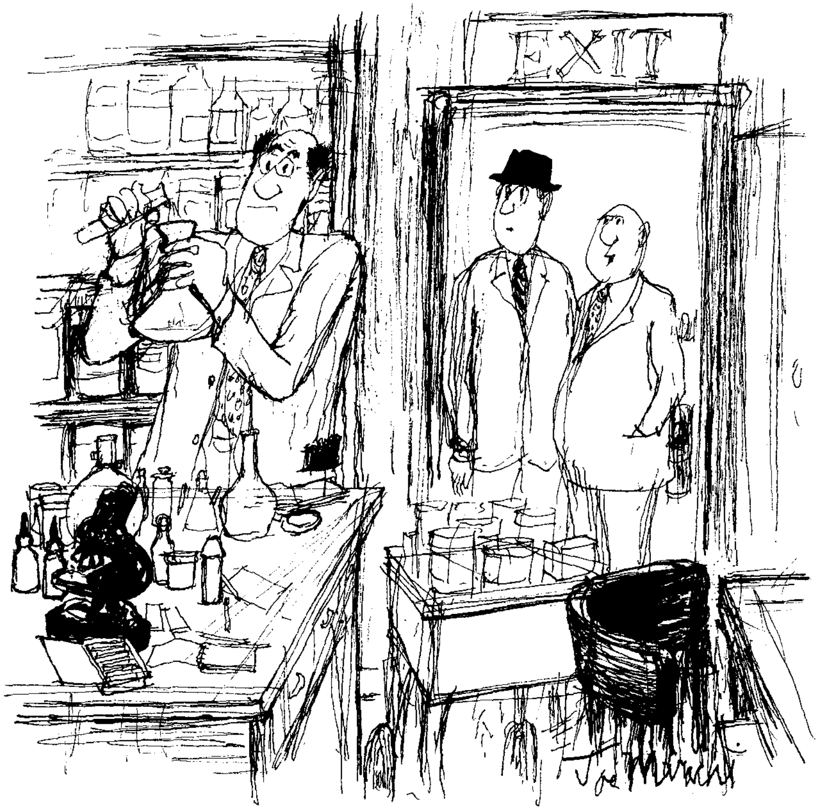
Whatever the results, such attempts at resuscitation have their place; it is impossible not to learn *something* from them. That Garafola makes no distinctions between the living and the dead and what lies somewhere in between, however, and that no unknowing reader could discern these differences from her text, reveals just how far she stands from the lifeblood of performance, from the justification and correction of direct experience. In this author's closed and self-referential circle of analysis and interpretation, the works themselves have become dispensable.

ASSEMBLING a production of Delibes's "Sylvia" for the Imperial Ballet in 1901, the young would-be scenic artists of Diaghilev's circle apportioned the work so that each would be responsible for a different segment, as befits the circumstances of friends eagerly starting out together. While by Buckle's Addison De Witt-like account this "sounds a very bad arrangement," for Garafola it is a sign of a collectivist utopia that is always behind us, receding, its "studio atmosphere" corrupted after the company's first Paris seasons by the Western "capitalist marketplace." Garafola's language is clearly loaded—with "commodities," "fetishes," "divisions of labor"—and her insistence on fitting the sprawling and various history of the Ballets Russes into predesignated categories makes for exaggerations at both ends of the social and moral scale.

These categories belong to a lecture-hall brand of Marxism, which, although it goes unacknowledged in Garafola's text, comes to seem—even nore than feminism or "the newer nethods of social history"—the conrolling vision of her entire effort. Having rejected the thick lenses used by earlier historians in examining the past, Garafola supplies recent models hat, sadly, turn out to be even more nisshaping. As a result, she bypasses works of art quite as egregiously as Buckle did. Buckle omitted those which did not fit into his story; Garafola omits those which do not suit her theories. If Buckle's work is houghtlessly and rather uselessly about the presumptions of class, Garafola's is determinedly and disasrously so.

Fortunately, in those instances in which one can stave off the dogmatic conclusion, and in which actual stories are allowed to unfold, Garafola's research pays off and her writing begins o flow. An account of the difficult lives of the non-star dancers is persuasively felt and told, particularly in the case of he 1916 American tour, which left nany hungry and nearly stranded. Here is the human despair that gives neaning to dry formula. Garafola convinces us that even so rarefied a group of creatures as ballet dancers can be reduced to the position of the exploited proletariat, of "pieceworkers." But hat Diaghilev must therefore take on he role of the exploiting upper class blows the whole construct apart. Shrunk to the supposed characteristics of the caste he is forced to represent, his dauntingly complex character is not merely villainized but deprived of all shading of belief and experience. Economics and self-interest account for all. Every action is viewed in the ight of a presumed ulterior financial notive. The 1921 London production of "The Sleeping Beauty" (retitled "The Sleeping Princess"), which by all contemporary accounts was the obect of Diaghilev's obsessive and passionate devotion, is treated as a cynical ploy, a kind of "Chorus Line"—a cash cow meant to raise funds for the experimental productions closer to his heart. That "The Sleeping Beauty" itself night have been close to his heart—and that its being so need not have excluded an ambition for experiment—is not within Garafola's philosophy.

Most telling is her reading of a letter that Diaghilev wrote in reply to a request from the Paris Opéra, in 1923, to remount "Daphnis and Chloë," a decade-old ballet of Fokine's. The choreographer had long vanished from view, but the impresario retained the rights. With delicate scruple, Diaghilev referred to the problem of "recalling certain passages which certain artists of my troupe no longer remember." He hesitated, requiring further consultation "in order to present the choreography in a perfect state so as to safeguard the interests of Monsieur Fokine himself." As so often, one is both grateful to Garafola for discovering the document and dismayed at what she makes of it. For her, Diaghilev's words demonstrate his awareness that faithfulness to an original had become "a selling point" and "an issue in an era of mechanical reproduction." (This allusion to Walter Benjamin's famous definition of our age, now a byword of Marxist aesthetics, was inevitable, but Garafola never suggests how it might apply to the subject at hand; it is merely a tag line, uncredited and unexplained.) While Fokine, in the tradition of earlier ballet masters, often restaged variants of his own works, "it was Diaghilev who prefigured the obsession with authenticity so characteristic of the modern artistic marketplace," Garafola writes. That Fokine was the creator of his choreography and Diaghilev was not is certainly the crucial point here, of which both men were well aware. Diaghilev concludes, "For it is his"—Fokine's—"name that will appear on the program, as author of the aforesaid choreography." The artist can change his works freely; the rest of us are bound to preserve them. Even if we proceed on the assumption that a concern for precise artistic intention is something of a modern sociological quirk, why is Diaghilev seen as an outside manipulator of these feelings rather than subject to them himself?



"Dr. Steinhauser's experiments are concerned with the possibility of converting toxic chemical waste into booze."

• •

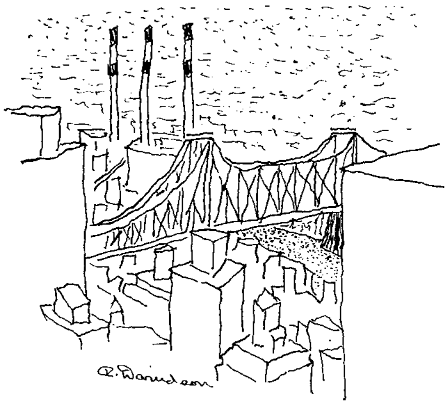
GARAFOLA makes much of her discovery of the booking lists for the seven performances of Diaghilev's 1908 production of the opera "Boris Godunov," in his one pre-balletic season at the Paris Opéra. The lists tell us just who was sitting in the expensive seats and providing Diaghilev's most serious patronage during that first Western season. The news she brings is that the audience was prominently

Jewish, members of the old German and Sephardic families that had intermarried and formed business and family alliances and begun to enter the Paris aristocracy: the world of Proust. The Ballets Russes has on past occasions been associated with Jewishness—perhaps one should say accused of it; fingers have pointed at the designer Bakst, the dancer Ida Rubinstein, and various financiers. Garafola quotes a 1925 *Dial* obituary of Bakst, written by Paul Morand, who is identified here by Garafola simply as a novelist, despite the more relevant fact—which turns up almost a hundred pages later—of his eventual notoriety as an ardent collaborationist in German-occupied Paris. Morand calls Bakst the key to the "great Israelite audiences that established the success of the Russian Ballet." This notion is being handed on even today. Paul Johnson's 1987 best-selling "A History of the Jews" refers to the Ballets Russes as "primarily a Jewish creation," and goes on to make some astonishing remarks, on the order of "If Bakst's voluptuousness was Jewish, so was his sense of colour."

Garafola is scrupulous in stating of the families in attendance, the Gunzburgs and Ephrussis and Lazards, "They came to Diaghilev's seasons, not as Jews, but as patrons, music lovers, and an integral part of the era's *tout Paris*." She immediately implies otherwise, however, by speculating that this group was consciously turning away from an earlier passion for Wagner, and doing so not because of changes in musical taste but because of Bayreuth's increasing association with "extremist ideology"—i.e., anti-Semitism—and that what this Jewish audience sought in Russian opera and ballet was "a 'racial' and even political counterpoint to Wagnerism."

This is highly unlikely, to say the least, given the historical situation: the conclusion of the Dreyfus affair, which enabled the Paris Jewish community to feel vindicated and confident, sure for the moment of France's republican and libertarian values; and the pogroms taking place in Russia, which had been driving Jewish immigrants west in great numbers, and compared with which the words of the German composer's followers were merely words, and not particularly unusual ones. The whole idea is anachronistic. In the years before the First World War, the letters and schedules of the Proustian circle are filled at least as often with references to Wagner as with references to the ballet. Those were the years in which most of the composer's works were performed in French for the first time at the Opéra—"Le Crépuscule des Dieux" in October, 1908; the entire "Anneau du Nibelung" in June, 1911—and although we will need another such accomplished researcher as Garafola to publish those booking sheets, it does seem likely that the same Jewish audience, far from manifesting a "racial" response, supported and attended Wagner's operas and the ballet alike.

But Garafola has a further suggestion. It was, she avers, the presence and the taste of this distinct public, composed of so many Jews and other "stateless cosmopolitans," that shifted the aesthetic emphasis of the Diaghilev repertory toward exotic Orientalism, and away from Fokine's "equally vivid" veins of Hellenism and Neo-Romanticism. "What thrilled Diaghilev's audience was the exoticism of *Cléopâtre*, *Schéhérazade*, and *Firebird*, whose visual opulence, luxurious costuming, and flamboyant effects mirrored"—and here she segues, without further comment or qualification, into a particularly stinging quotation from Morand's Bakst obituary—" 'the boldness of the audience's dress, its immodesties, extravagant coiffures, depilated bodies, cosmetics.' " Nothing like meretricious dazzle to please an "Israelite" audience? It is unfortunate that in her zeal to redeem Fokine by attacking his haute-bourgeois audience Garafola relies on Paul Morand's clearly anti-Semitic remarks. Certainly, she herself has no such bias; in fact, these early Jewish enthusiasts stand quite high with her, in contrast to the post-1913 onslaught of her "noisy, untutored mob" of "consumers." (The newcomers liked to buy souvenir books.) What she is reaching for is yet another external cause of Fokine's predilection for increasingly stale Levantine fantasy: They made him do it. She is also straining to give her major archival discovery all the significance she can muster. What would those names matter if they had had no effect? Who could distinguish them from mere "society palaver"? How else is one to inflate arcane data into programmatic evidence?



SINCE the collapse of the Ballets Russes, Garafola informs us in her concluding pages, ballet has lost the great audience of intellectuals and artists which Diaghilev gathered to it. This assertion sets the stage for a preposterous dénouement: the Smart Art world has returned to the fold with the Joffrey Ballet's reconstructed "Rite of Spring." She saw lots of its members there on opening night! By now, one has fully anticipated the author's inability to comprehend the decades of George Balanchine's unparalleled genius, and its unique effect on our cultural and intellectual life. Up until the Nijinsky event in 1987, we are told, among intellectuals ballet had become "at best an occasional enjoyment" and at worst "a byword for artistic conservatism and privilege." But that, of course, is what Garafola finds classical ballet always to have been. There is an ideal dimly apparent throughout this book, and sustaining it, of a modern art of real "disruptive force"—an art that can serve as "a vehicle for social change." Garafola does not tell us what her vision of such an art is, but in her view all kinds of difficulties have kept the possibility from fulfillment in ballet: the origins of the art, its audiences, its financing. As for the ballet itself, one is, finally, hard put to imagine what has drawn Garafola to the subject at all.

It is disturbing to think of this book as a portent of what may be coming from the university presses and programs, intent on a new *disciplina*. Despite its heroic accumulation of newly unearthed facts and documents, Garafola's work reveals as much about today's academic ideologies and jargons as about Diaghilev and his period, and a great deal more about them than about dance. But the very fact of its publication establishes it as an example, and its dense pages of research and interpretation make a formidable impression. It appears to be a book full of answers, and in many ways it is, if that word can be applied to conclusions determined by narrow and vitiated premises. The field of dance history is wide open. Forget the answers; learn to ask the questions.

—CLAUDIA ROTH PIERPONT

BRIEFLY NOTED

GENERAL

THE WARS OF WATERGATE: THE LAST CRISIS OF RICHARD NIXON, by Stanley I. Kutler (Knopf; $24.95). A scholarly and thoughtful account that answers the question "What did the President know and when did he know it?" and much more besides. As a prelude to his detailed narrative, Mr. Kutler describes the stretching of Presidential powers and the widespread anxiety caused by dissent during the nineteen-sixties. He tells the story of the circumstances that in the summer of 1974 led to the President's resignation; demonstrates how difficult it was for the Justice Department, Congress, and the public to make sense out of seemingly disconnected events and revelations; and assesses the performance of the host of investigators who were making their way through the doings of the Administration, often unable to believe their discoveries. He also considers Watergate's effect on the governing of the United States, and its place in the history of our democracy. The author avoids sensationalism, but his serious book is frequently as tense as a thriller.

MYSTERY AND CRIME

STARDUST, by Robert B. Parker (Putnam; $18.95). Mr. Parker's powers occasionally falter, but not this time. Spenser, the Boston private investigator who makes do with only one name, is here given an assignment well worth our while: the safeguarding of the beautiful and priceless TV star Jill Joyce, who is being threatened by someone whom she is unwilling, or, more often, too drunk, to describe. Every component that gives Mr. Parker's best novels their distinction—the sharp writing ("a barn, newly built, that mimicked the old barns of New England the way fashion mimics clothing"), the quicksilver banter, the pacing, and the snapshot portraits—is firmly and satisfyingly in place.

RUNNING FIX, by Tony Gibbs (Random House; $18.95). A riveting tale of violent happenings at sea involving the charter yacht Glory. The yacht Sea Horse seems to have sunk without trace on the run back to New York from the Bermuda race. The owner of the Glory, a college roommate of a young woman lost in the reported sinking, is commissioned by the young woman's father, who has reason to believe that his daughter is alive, to clear up the mystery. Enlisting her two shipmates, the Glory's skipper and mate, she begins an investigation that soon pitches her into a sinister milieu of putative world savers, and introduces us to a novel set of villains—killer intellectuals. Mr. Gibbs has a somewhat old-fashioned expository style, and a talent for explaining the mysteries of masted vessels.

COYOTE WAITS, by Tony Hillerman (Harper & Row; $19.95). Officer Chee and Lieutenant Leaphorn of the Navajo Tribal Police are again ranging across the Big Reservation. The book begins with the murder of a fellow-officer, and the arrest by Chee of a suspect walking drunkenly away from the scene with the murder weapon tucked in his belt. The F.B.I. has jurisdiction in the case but does little except prepare to prosecute the suspect, leaving Chee and Leaphorn to pursue the loose ends of the crime independently. By novel's end, three more people are dead, and along the way we must sort out the doings of a Vietnamese refugee with C.I.A. connections, an odious history professor, and a turn-of-the-century train robber. Mr. Hillerman's gift lies in his ability to mingle present-day passions with the magical realm of Navajo myths, respecting the possibilities of the supernatural yet arriving at a solution rooted in today's Southwest. His recent books, however, show a growing taste for extravagant plots, and his characters are becoming distressingly predictable. Mr. Hillerman has created a fascinating world; he should take care not to reduce it to a formula.

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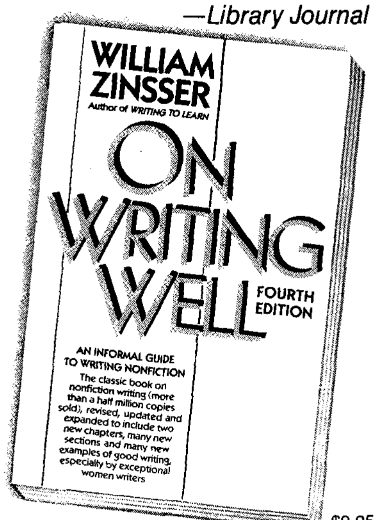
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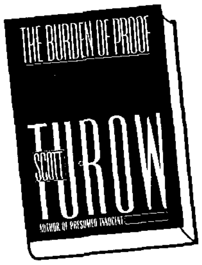

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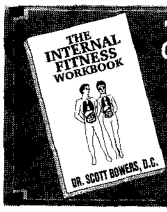

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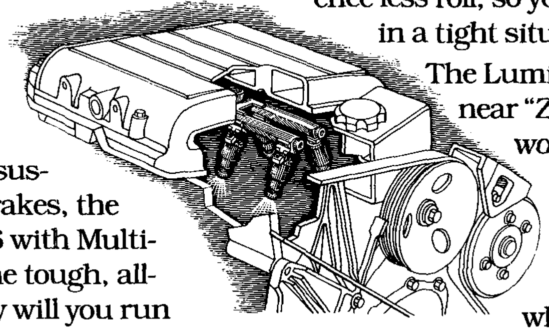

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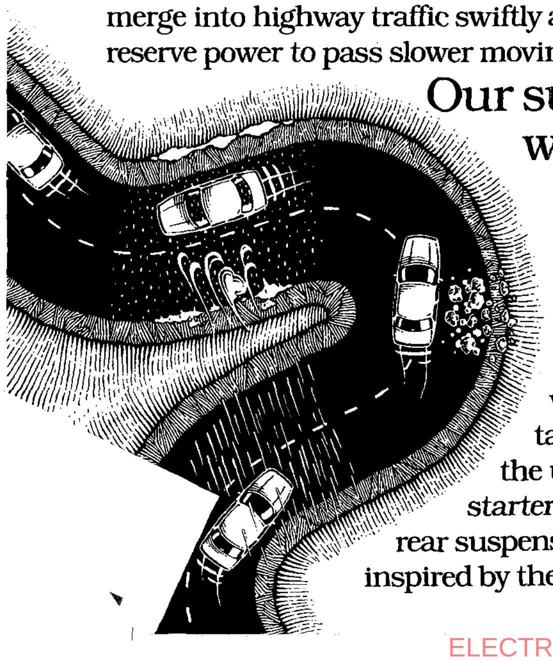

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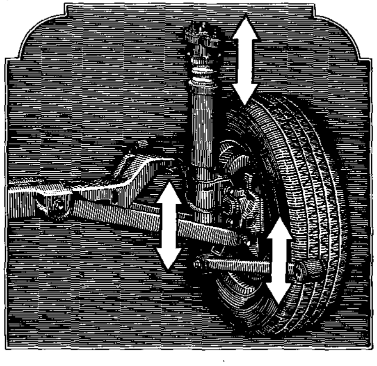
The Lumina's front suspension also boasts near "Zero Scrub Radii." Unfortunately, i would take pages to explain it. So suffice it to say that in some cars when you drive through a puddl at 35 miles an hour your car will slow down and your steering wheel will pull. To lessen this, the Lumina was designed with near Zero Scrub Radii which reduces the sensitivity of your front wheels to changes in the road to help you stay in control without having to overcompensate at the steering wheel. A very helpful feature.



We'd like to clear the air about aerodynamics.

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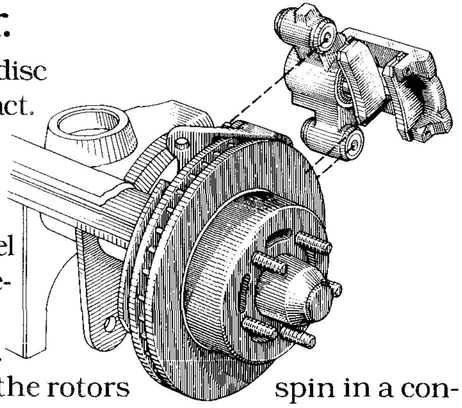

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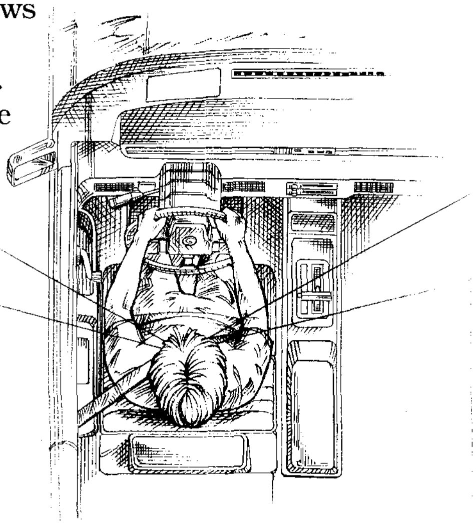

Notice all the glass. The windows seem deep and wide, don't they? While providing a very comfortable feeling of expansiveness, this also serves a very practical function: better visibility. And while all that glass helps eliminate blind spots, standard tinted windows all the way around can cut down on glare, too.

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Now we hope we didn't bore you with all these explanations, but we thought the more you knew about the Lumina Sedan before getting into it, the more you and your family would be able to get out of it.

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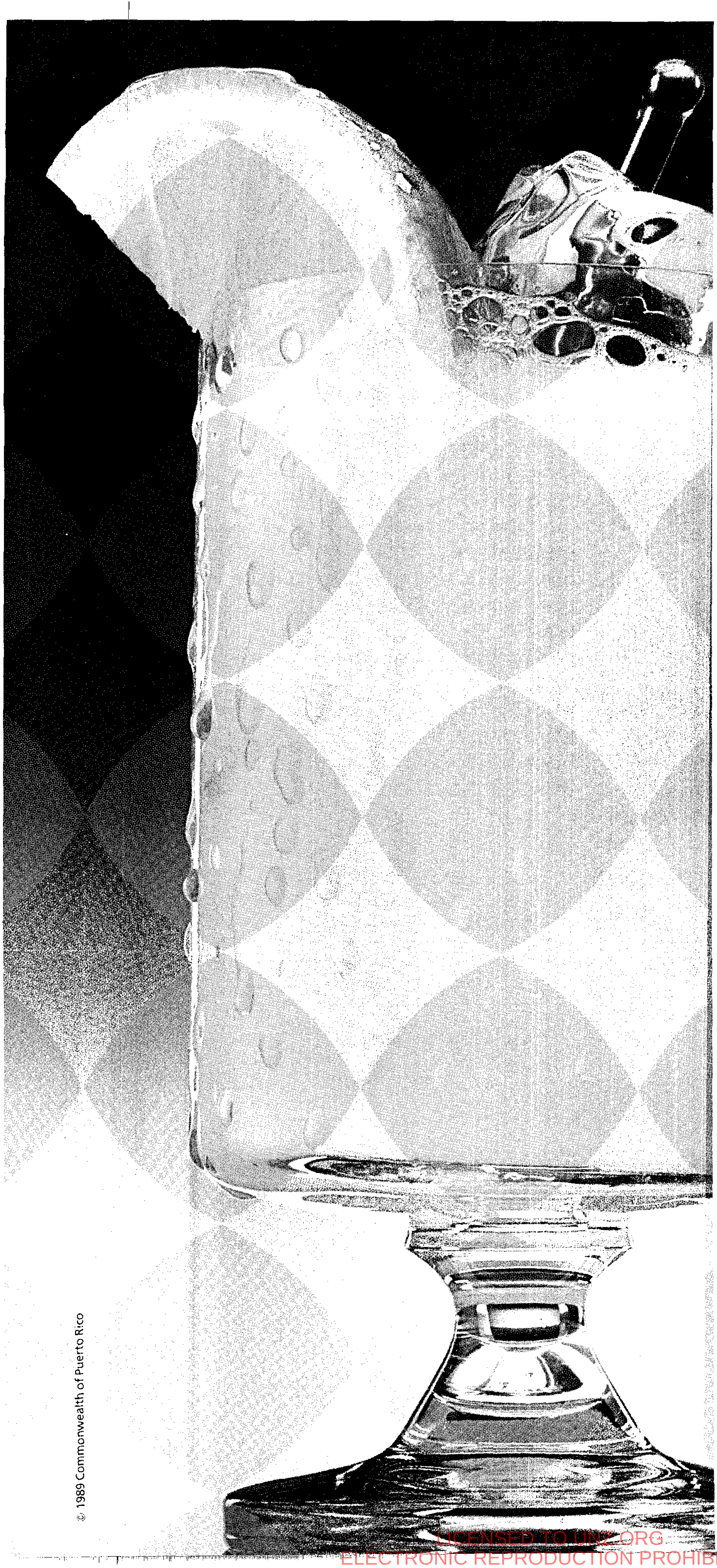

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